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Edited by
Sir J. A. Hammerton

XIII. RUSSIAN, Etc.

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Carl van Doren, Ph.D.

Author, critic, editor. Associate Professor in English at Columbia University, New York, since 1916. Author of "Life of Thomas Love Peacock," "Contemporary American Novelists," and co-editor of "The Cambridge History of American Literature."

Sir Frederick Wedmore

Critic and author. His works included "The Life of Balzac," and "On Books and Arts." He was also the writer of many brilliant short stories.

Editorial Note

A SHORT story may be a mere anecdote of three hundred words or a work of ten or fifteen thousand. In content it may be anything from a glimpse of character, an incident, to a highly finished picture of life. But it should be a complete work of imagination, its effect achieved with a minimum of personages and events.

TO select the best thousand examples was a task that could be achieved only on arbitrary lines. As to length, three thousand words was the ideal average, but this excluded some of the finest stories, so exceptions had to be allowed. National characteristics also had consideration. Another test was the value of a story as illustrating the development of the art.

PROBLEMS of arrangement were not entirely solved by classification according to the country of each writer's origin. This puts Richard Steele into the Irish volume and separates those ideal literary partners Agnes and Egerton Castle. But it is the best possible arrangement for the work, and the index makes reference easy. The inclusion of a series of stories of the War became possible when the War itself ruled out all modern German work.

A WORD as to the method of selection. The General Editor prepared a trial list of titles which were submitted to all the members of the Editorial Board, who rejected and added according to their individual tastes and knowledge. These individual lists were then collated and the final list evolved. The thousand stories selected are therefore representative of the combined opinion of the whole group of editors. A very few modifications of the final list were made necessary by difficulties of copyright and considerations of Anglo-Saxon taste in certain translations from foreign literatures.

MOST of the foreign stories have been specially translated, and all copyrights, in both stories and translations, the use of which authors and publishers have courteously permitted, are duly credited at the end of each volume.

J. A. H.

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THE RUSSIAN STORY-TELLERS

From Chirikov to Teleshov

IN the literature of Russia as manifested in this group of writers born during the second half of the nineteenth century, moods of depression and gloom are seen to be still largely those which have moved the authors to utterance. Extraordinary skill is shown in rendering especially certain morbidities of individual characters at war with circumstance or their fellows. Only occasionally are there moments in which the writers have felt moved by lighter moods, only occasionally have they seemed able to recognise anything of a joyous note in life. The typical Russian story-writers may be looked upon, to adapt Byron's well-known words, as human nature's sternest painters, presenting with grim impressive power the psychological subtleties of abnormal individualities. the realism of gloom rather than that of glamour. Yet despite the low tone of their work, they have proved masters in its presentation, their short stories being for the most part studies in monotone which compel admiration by the faithfulness with which they are rendered, the intense realisation with which they are made to project themselves on the reader's mind.

CHIRIKOV

Eugene N. Chirikov (b. 1864) had already been a provincial doctor for several years when he turned from medicine to literature, and won a reputation both as story-teller and dramatist. His play, "The Jew,"

was a success not only in Russia but also abroad. In his plays and in his stories Chirikov presents with considerable skill characters drawn from the people whom he had observed during his life in the country as a medical practitioner. In "Faust" he gives a singularly effective piece of realistic description of the home life of a somewhat stodgy bank clerk, and of his wife seeing her past romance through the haze of time and fretting against the humdrum domesticities to which that romance had led. Another aspect of his realistic work is shown in "Strained Relations," a slight but convincingly true account, in a kind of sardonic humour, of the rebellious feelings of a boy who refuses to eat that he may thereby punish his family, and then, finding himself unable to suffer hunger, makes himself ill with surreptitious feeding. The story might be summed up as the genesis of a stomach-ache, and yet it is so told as to make the weak rebel a very real person, with perhaps a significance implied beyond the limits of the actual narrative.

MEREJKOVSKY

Dmitri S. Merejkovsky (b. 1865) is one of the later Russian writers who have made the wildest appeal to readers beyond the confines of their own country. He has done so perhaps the more fully because he has been less peculiarly Russian than most of his contemporaries. Regarding the literature of his country as decadent, he sought to turn the attention of Russian writers to French symbolism as a means towards a fresh literary development, and where his immediate contemporaries were revealing in sombre tones the brooding thoughts and feelings of their own time, he felt the fascination of the antique, and, delighting in the depicting of detail, found in historical romance the field best suited to his genius. He is therefore fittingly represented here by "Love is Stronger than Death," his rendering from the Italian of the story of Ginevra, as it was told in the *Novellæ* of Domenico Manni, an eighteenth-century Florentine; he has touched the tender romantic story into new life by the manner of his retelling.

ZINAÏDA HIPPIUS

It is curious that while Merejkovsky should stand out among his compatriot contemporaries as "a foreigner in Russian literature," Mme. Merejkovsky (b. 1867), better known by her pseudonym as Zinaïda Hippus, should be regarded as one of the founders of Russian modernism. The story by which she is here represented has attracted considerable attention by the power with which it suggests an abnormal

tie between two people—in this particular case a mother and son. The simple title, "Apple Blossom," might be thought to promise an idyll, but modernism in Russia blends the idyllic with something almost deeper than tragedy, and here it is shown how the awakening of love in the young man's soul makes his mother age and die, and her dying makes him age and seek death.

SKITALITZ

In the story by Skitalitz, which is the writing-name of A. Petrov (b. 1868), we have an instance of the Russian treatment of a theme by no means peculiarly Russian. The love of the big, irresponsible, talented man for the petite woman on whom he has to throw the limelight would be humorous if it were not for the very real feeling with which his emotions are portrayed and for the grim revenge which the artist takes for the spurning of the man.

GORKY

Maxim Gorky (b. 1868), whose proper name is Alexey Maximovich Pyeshkov, is among the English-speaking peoples probably the best-known of the late nineteenth-century fiction writers of Russia. Much of his work embodies his own terrible experiences, for he learnt in suffering much of that which he gives forth in his stories, and it is in his short stories that he best reveals his genius. The pen-name which he has chosen may be regarded as something of a confession of his general attitude towards humanity, for it is translated as Maxim the Bitter. Gorky may be further regarded as one of the extreme representatives of those Russian writers who have dipped their pens in blackness and eclipse, for he rarely turns to anything in the nature of a light theme, and is peculiarly successful in his delineation of social pariahs, of tramps and outcasts, of men who are more or less outside the ordinary conventions of life. In the stories by which he is here represented his quality is well illustrated.

The awful isolation of the men of the underground bakery in "Twenty-six Men and a Girl," shows something of his relentless power in portraying the life of beings in a supposedly civilised community at its very nadir. It etches itself on the memory unforgettably. Something of a contrast is afforded by "Comrades," which is humorous in conception, and not without humour in its treatment. In "Simple Folk" is described an episode in a wanderer's life in which the writer limns the plain people of a country hamlet with such accentuating touches of

misery or tragedy as mark most of his work. Then comes "Makar Chudra," the first of his stories to be printed; a wonderful romance of gipsy lore, purporting to be told by an old gipsy who had himself witnessed the tragedy of passion in conflict with *amour propre*.

The other stories represent the gruesome grimness with which Gorky renders the experiences of human flotsam among whom he had drifted in the years of his terrible apprenticeship to the business of life. "In the Steppes" closes with a moral for which Gorky shows a certain fondness, if anything so formal may be attached to his terrible fragments of life as he sees it—"roam over the earth, learn all there is to learn, and don't submit to any one." "Boleslov" is a pathetic study of an ungainly woman denied the love for which she craves.

KUPRIN

Alexander I. Kuprin (b. 1870) ranks as one of the chief of the younger Russian fictionists, being more impersonal, more determinedly an artist than most of his contemporaries who specialise in the socially or psychologically abnormal. He is a story-teller whose aim, as a Russian critic has put it, is "to paint life as it appears to him," and to do so with no other purpose than that of artistic presentation. After some years in the military service Kuprin resigned from the army that he might devote himself to literature, and by his revealing stories of military life established an immediate reputation. The stories by which he is here represented serve to indicate the range of his art. "Psyche," it is true, with its vivid presentation of developing madness, marks one of his excursions into sinister psychology in its fresh treatment of the legend of Pygmalion and Galatea. "Lenotchka," a tender scrap of reminiscential romance, gives in another connection a variant of that summing-up which, as has already been noted, Gorky employs more than once—"one can only love life and submit." "The Slavonic Soul" is individualised in a single figure, the servant-man Vass, "faithful, pure, contradictory, absurd yet large." "As at Home" shows something of sordidness relieved by faith and hope; while "A Clump of Lilac" is pure comedy.

ANDREYEV

Leonid N. Andreyev (1870-1919) has been not inaptly described as a writer who has supped on horrors. He was as terrible as Gorky, but an essential difference may perhaps be that where the latter describes life as he has seen it as though it were life seen whole, Andreyev appeared

rather to select abnormalities while recognising them as such. In Russia he was hailed as the spiritual son of Chekov, though, as Serge Persky put it, "the grey tones of Chekov have, in Andreyev, become black; his rather sad humour has been transformed into tragic irony; his subtle impressionability into morbid sensibility." Much of his work was sheer morbidity, though often, as in "The Thief," set forth with rare descriptive skill. In that story there is something peculiarly vivid in the account of the thrice-convicted thief indulging in an unnecessary theft on starting on a railway journey, and in his interpretation, in moods passing from joyousness to terror, of the noise of the travelling train.

"The Angel" is almost like a morbid perversion of a Hans Andersen type of story, while "Valia" is another study of childhood charged with pathos. "Silence" is a psychological sketch of fearful impressiveness, revealing the mind of a silence-haunted priest whose neurotic daughter has committed suicide and whose wife is stricken with paralysis. "The Grand Slam" is a little masterpiece of the ironical, while "Laughter"—showing a sincere lover seeking to reveal his passion through a grotesque mask—illustrates another use of that irony of which Andreyev had ready command.

ARTSIBASHEV

Michail P. Artsibashev (1878-1926) was an able and realistic writer whose earlier novels suffered from their erotic tendencies, though his work won prompt success by its evidence of real power. The story of his here given, "From a Basement," shows that power in the portrayal of a miserable cellar-dwelling shoemaker stung to murder by the smug complacency with which respectability insults the working man.

OTHER WRITERS

From the stories of the younger Russian fictionists it may be gathered that there is a tendency, if it be no more, to break from the depression and gloom which have so long ruled in the imaginative literature of their country. Certainly in Madame Estafieva's "Vania" and the Princess Metchersky's "A Race on the Neva," something of that tendency is discernible, for, without being in any way less Russian in spirit, we find in the first a lighter social touch and in the second a vivid description of action in great contrast with the brooding and introspection characteristic of so much of Russian fiction. J. Mitropolsky's

"Water" is a further illustration of intense power manifested in rendering terrible emotions. Alexey Remisov's "The Opera" is an essay in sombre humour, and Nicolai Teleshov's "The Duel" a grim contrast peculiarly Russian, and an appalling comment on the senseless futility of duelling.

W. J.

EUGENE N. CHIRIKOV

B. 1864

FAUST

WHEN Ivan Mikhailovich awoke one morning, the whole household was already long up, and from the distance came the ringing voices of the children, the rattling of the breakfast dishes, the commanding voice of Maria Petrovna, his mother-in-law, and from the drawing-room the chirping of the canary, which sounded to his ears like a policeman's whistle. He did not feel like getting up; he felt like lying a bit longer, too lazy to dress; therefore he smoked a few cigarettes before getting up strength for the ordeal.

He usually rose dissatisfied and out of sorts, because he did not much fancy the rules of life by which one had to hurry with ablutions, toilet, breakfast, and then go to the bank.

"Go and see if papa has wakened yet!" he heard his wife say, and a moment afterwards a round little head was thrust through the doorway, and a child's treble chimed in:

"Papa! Are you up?"

"I am, I am!" Ivan Mikhailovich replied, ill-pleased, and angrily washed his face, gurgling, sputtering, and groaning.

At the breakfast table he sat sulky and preoccupied, as if wholly taken up with some very important thoughts, and did not deign to pay the least attention to any one. His wife, casually glancing up at him, thought: "He must have lost at cards at the club last night, and does not know now where to get the money to pay up."

At ten, Ivan Mikhailovich went to the bank, from which he returned at four, tired, hungry, and out of sorts. Sitting down to the table, he tucked his napkin under his chin, and ate with a loud smacking of the lips; after he had filled himself he invariably grew good-natured, and said: "Well, now we shall take a little nap," and went into his study, in which were displayed a bearskin, a pair of reindeer antlers, and a rifle from which he had never fired a shot. There he coughed and growled for a long time, and afterward snored so loudly that the children feared to approach too near the door of the study, and when the nurse wished to stop a fight or a quarrel between them she would say: "There—the

bear is asleep in papa's room—I will let the bear out after you ! ”

Ivan Mikhailovich was usually awakened about eight in the evening, when he would once more grow angry and shout : “ Yes, yes, I hear,” immediately falling asleep again. Afterward he came out of the study puffy and heavy-eyed, looking indeed very much like a bear, and began to shout in a husky voice :

“ I would like to know why I was not wakened in time ? ”

“ You were, and you replied, ‘ I hear ! ’ ”

“ I did ! Well, what of it ? A person is not supposed to be responsible for what he says when half asleep. Is the samovar ready ? ”

Then he went into the dining-room, and sat down to the tea-table with his paper—and again with the appearance of a man whose thoughts are wholly occupied with very serious and important matters. His wife, Xenia Pavlovna, poured out the tea, and he could hardly see her face from behind the samovar. Maria Petrovna sat at the other end of the table, in her hand a child's stocking, which she was for ever darning.

They were generally silent, only rarely exchanging laconic questions and answers : “ More tea ? ”—“ Please.”—“ Again there is no lemon ? ”—“ Why, it is lying before your very nose ! ”

After tea Ivan Mikhailovich went to his club, where he played cards, after which he had his supper there, and coming home about two in the morning, found his wife already sleeping. Only Maria Petrovna was still up, and she usually met him in *déshabillé*, with an old wrap thrown over her shoulders, her hair in disorder, and with sighs. Ivan Mikhailovich understood but too well the hidden meaning of these sighs : they expressed silent reproaches and indirect disapproval of his conduct. Therefore, while taking off his snow-boots, Ivan Mikhailovich said : “ Please spare me your sighs ! ”

Xenia Pavlovna never reproached her husband. She had long ago become accustomed both to Ivan Mikhailovich's snoring and to his being away. Only Maria Petrovna could not become resigned to it.

“ What kind of a husband is he ! All you see of him is his dressing-gown on the peg,” she said.

“ Oh, don't say that, mother. All husbands are like that,” remarked Xenia Pavlovna, but her face became sad and clouded, and at last a sort of concentrated musing settled upon it. Walking up and down the drawing-room in the twilight, she would keep thinking about something or other, and sing in a low, sweet voice : “ Beyond the distant horizon there is a happy land.”

Then she shook her head with a jerk and went into the nursery.

Here she played dolls with the children, romped about with them, and told them fairy-tales about Sister Alenushka and Brother Ivanushka.

The older boy was very like his father, before the latter got into the habit of snoring and spitting and appearing before Xenia Pavlovna in his shirt sleeves. Gazing at this boy of hers, Xenia Pavlovna was carried away into the past, and the dreams of her far-away youth, dimmed and partly obscured by time, drove out of her heart the feelings of emptiness, oppressive ennui, and dissatisfaction.

"Mama! Mamochka! Now tell us about Baba Yaga! Good?"

"Well, very good. Once there was a Baba Yaga, with a bony leg——"

"Did she snore?" asked the little girl, and her blue eyes opened wide, resting with fear and expectation on her mother's face. Xenia Pavlovna broke out in a hearty laugh, caught her girlie in her arms, and, kissing her, forgot everything else in the world.

About twice a month they were at home to visitors. All their guests were sedate, respectable, and dull; people whose whole life ran smoothly, monotonously, without a hitch, through the same deep rut; they were all very tiresome, and loved to tell the same things over and over, and behave and act as if by long-established rule. First they sat in the drawing-room and spoke of their homes and of the weather; and while Xenia Pavlovna entertained them with conversation, her mother set the tea things, and while she filled the dishes with preserves she looked apprehensively into the jars and muttered: "It's lasting so well that fresh fruit is not even to be thought of. The Lord grant it lasts till Easter." And putting the sugar from the large paper bag into the cut-glass sugar-bowl, she thought aloud: "Twenty pounds, indeed! Why, even forty would not suffice!"

"Please come and have some tea!" she said invitingly, with an amiable, pleasant smile on her face. In the dining-room, where tea was served, they all took their places in a staid and dignified manner, making fun of those who were unlucky enough to get places at the table corners, telling them that they would not marry for seven years; and playing with their teaspoons, they said: "Thank you!" and, "If you will be so kind!" And then they once more returned to the talk about their apartments, the high price of provisions, and the ailments of the little ones. Tea finished, they repaired to the drawing-room, in which the little card-tables had already been placed, and provided with candles, cards, and chalk; everybody became livelier, and the oppressive frame of mind, under which people always labour when they are called upon to do something they had not come to do, was dispelled.

The ladies and gentlemen sat down at the tables, quarrelled, disputed, reproached one another, and broke out simultaneously into peals of merriment; in the main, they all seemed now the most happy people in the world. They were so much engrossed with their play that they were like lunatics, who could hardly understand if an outsider, there by some chance, not playing cards, and therefore suffering with ennui, spoke to them about some outside matter.

Xenia Pavlovna did not play: she and her mother were wholly taken up with the preparations for supper, while the guests were occupied with the whist-tables. She and Maria Petrovna quarrelled a little on such occasions, but always managed to hide their differences from their guests.

When supper was announced all the guests sprang from their seats, pushed back their chairs, and laughingly went to the table. Only two of the most enthusiastic would remain in their places, and continue to wrangle and to gesticulate over the knave of spades, seeming not to care whether they had their supper or not, if only they could prove to each other the truth of their own assertions. The master of the house would put his arm about the waist of each and carry them off.

"Well, let us have a tiny one!" Ivan Mikhailovich generally began. A few "tiny" ones were drunk without any well-wishing, then they drank the health of Xenia Pavlovna and the other ladies present. Their faces reddened, their eyes became languishing, and from across the table was continually heard: "Please pass the caviare this way, Peter Vasilievich!" or "Please send those delicious herrings our way, Nicolai Gregorievich!"

Puns, jests and anecdotes were incessantly exchanged, some of them very stale and told for the fiftieth time at that very table. On these occasions Ivan Mikhailovich never failed to recount with evident pride that he and Xenia had married for love. "Ours was a love match. I can almost say that I abducted Xenia Pavlovna."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, just so! I remember it as if it happened to-day. I nearly committed suicide! Yes! We had an appointment in the garden (a luxurious garden it was! They very foolishly sold both the house and garden!). Well, so I stand there in the old arbour, stand and wait. And my heart is beating so loudly that it seems to me that a train must be passing somewhere—tock-tock-tock!" Here Ivan Mikhailovich began to tell in detail how it all happened, and Xenia Pavlovna listened to his narrative from where she sat, slightly blushing, with half-closed eyes, and a little shiver. "At last she arrived in a carriage!"

"Came on foot, not in a carriage!" Xenia Pavlovna unexpectedly corrected him, because every stroke, every detail of these far-away recollections was inexpressibly dear to her.

"Well, in a carriage or on foot. What material difference does it make!" angrily remarked Ivan Mikhailovich, greatly displeased at being interrupted, and continued his story, totally ignoring the corrections as well as Xenia Pavlovna herself, as if this Xenia Pavlovna and that other one, about whom he was tell his guests, had nothing whatsoever in common.

After supper they once more drank tea, yawned, covering the mouth with the hand, or with the napkin, and breathed hard, looking at their watches, and exchanging glances with their wives. "Yes, it is about time!" replied the wives, and the guests began to take their leave, the women kissed good-bye, the men looked for their snow-boots and hats, and again joked.

After the guests had gone, leaving behind them tobacco smoke, glasses half-full of undrunk tea, and the scraps of the supper, the house suddenly subsided into quiet and peace, and Xenia Pavlovna sank into a chair, and remained motionless in a silent antipathy to her surroundings. She rested from the idle talk, noise, amiable smiles, and entertaining, and felt as if she were just recovering from a serious illness or had had to go through some severe penance. The mother, passing through the drawing-room, quickly threw open the ventilators, and remarked: "Just like a barrack," pulling out of the flower-pots the cigarette-ends which had been stuck into the earth by the smokers, and, waxing angry: "I purposely placed two ash-trays on each card-table, but no! they must go and stick their cigarette-ends into the flower-pots!" Then she began to set the house to rights and clear the tables; and all this she did with irritation. Ivan Mikhailovich threw off his coat, opened his vest, and, walking through the rooms, yawned, opening his mouth wide and displaying his teeth. Then he went into the bedroom, undressed, and stretched himself comfortably on the soft mattress of the splendid, wide bed.

"Can't you leave off putting the things in order till morning! Lord, how cleanliness has suddenly taken hold of them!" he shouted through the whole house, and listened: "Well, now even the children have revolted!"

From the nursery came the crying of the children and the soothing voice of his wife. Well, now he knew that the racket would go on for a long time—she would not get away from them very soon. And turning to the wall, he pulled the coverlet higher.

Once or twice during the month they went visiting. And there the same story was repeated: conversations about the health of the little ones, the houses, servants, the green tables, cigarette

smoke, disputes about the knave of spades, and a supper with vodka, cheap wine, caviare, pickled herrings, and the indispensable cutlets and green peas. And after they left, here, too, no doubt, was an opening of ventilators, and a perfect enjoyment of the ensuing quiet and peace.

And so their life went on from day to day, monotonous and tiresome, like a rainy evening, when everything is wet, grey, and cloudy—an oppressive, colourless life. "We live just as if we were turning over the pages of a cookery book. One day only differs from another in so far as that yesterday we had rice soup and cutlets for dinner, and to-day cabbage soup and cutlets," sometimes thought Xenia Pavlovna, and a kind of despair suddenly took possession of all her being, and it seemed to her that she must decide on something, do something. But what should she do? And in reply to this a sad smile appeared on her lips—gentle and helpless—and her eyes filled with unbidden tears.

Then she would get a fit of the blues. Everything suddenly began to bore her; she did not care to see any one, nor talk to any one; it seemed to her that people spoke not of what they thought, nor of what interested them, but were, on the contrary, doing their best to hide their real thoughts; that they laughed at things not because they thought them laughable, but simply from politeness and wishing to appear amiable. And that all of them were only pretending to be good and clever, while in reality they were trivial, stupid, and unbearably tiresome.

She sat down at the window, resting her head on her hand, and looked out upon the street, where the tiresome, hateful day was dying away in a grey twilight. She remembered her youth, when life had seemed so great, with immeasurable horizons enveloped in an alluring, dove-coloured mist, so interesting in its endless variations, so enigmatic and incomprehensible; when it seemed that the most important and wished-for thing was still before her, when her maiden heart stood still with fear and curiosity before the unknown future, when her heart was filled with a vague alarm in the expectation of a great happiness, perhaps the happiness of a triumphant love. And here it is—real life. The horizon ends with the grocer's shop across the street and is enveloped in the poetry of the cookery book. All of them live from day to day, are bored, gossip, speak of their dwellings, servants, occupations, play cards, bear children, and complain—the husbands about their wives and the wives about their husbands. And there is no triumphant love anywhere—but only triumphant triviality, rascality, and ennui. All that was interesting in life was already a thing of the past, it had all happened long before; then she had been supremely happy, and that happiness—which is given to one

only once in life—passed away imperceptibly, and would nevermore return.

It grew darker ; on the streets appeared timidly blinking yellow lights. The bells rang for vespers, and this ringing of the church-bells awakened in her soul something vague and a little frightening : a sad longing for something which had gone for ever ; or was it that it reproached the soul soiled by life ? “ Evening bells, evening bells ! ” Xenia whispered with a deep sigh.

Suddenly in the dim drawing-room appeared a whitish figure : it was Ivan Mikhailovich, who came out of his study without a vest. He stretched, yawned, let out an “ O-go-go-go ! ” and remarked : “ I dined well and enjoyed a splendid snooze. What are you dreaming about ? ”

“ Oh, just this. I was thinking what a tiresome affair it is to live in this world ! ”

“ How is that ! After you have had three children you all at once begin to find life tiresome ? ”

“ Oh, how commonplace and trivial this is ! ”

“ Well, you are again in the dumps ! ” Ivan Mikhailovich spoke angrily and turned away. Xenia Pavlovna broke into a laugh, then this laugh became intermixed with crying, and ended in hysterics.

“ Oh ! The devil is loose ! ” muttered Ivan Mikhailovich, and rang for the maid, whom he ordered to fetch some water. “ Cold, from the tap. ”

His mother-in-law, rushing into the room, cried : “ What is the matter ? What have you done to her ? ” The whites of her eyes glittered in the dark, and her whole demeanour expressed a thirst for revenge and complete redress. “ What have you done to her ? ”

“ I have done absolutely nothing to her ! And I do not know, absolutely, do not know, why she started all this humbug ! She is simply an unbalanced woman, your daughter is, absolutely unbalanced ! ”

“ You have offended her ? ”

“ Neither by word nor intention ! I came into the drawing-room and found her moaning at the window ; all at once, without provocation, she began to laugh, then to cry, ” said Ivan Mikhailovich, shrugging his shoulders and gesticulating ; but Maria Petrovna, whom Ivan Mikhailovich, in moments of exasperation, sometimes called “ the old witch, ” did not believe him, and insistently demanded an explanation : “ Don’t you tell me that. Where did you get it that she is unbalanced ? We never had any one of an unbalanced mind in our family—every one was healthy and sane. What have you been doing to her ? ”

“ All right, then ! All right, if they were all sane and normal !

I am glad to hear it ! " said Ivan Mikhailovich angrily, and speedily left the house. He went to the club, where he played cards, playing high from pure spite, and losing also from pure spitefulness. In the meantime Maria Petrovna paced the room with a pained expression on her face, unable to understand what had passed between the two. Several times she approached Xenia Pavlovna, and began :

" Why is all this quarrelling going on in the house lately ? What is the reason for it ? Have you found out anything wrong about him, or what ? "

" I have found out nothing ! "

" Has he offended you in any way ? "

" No, no. What makes you think so ? "

" You do wrong to hide it from me. It will leak out somehow, do not fear. I shall find out everything, my lady ! " Then she suddenly changed her tone and approached the matter from a different side :

" He is jealous. You should not provoke him. "

" Oh, please don't ! He is simply stupid, that is all ! " Xenia Pavlovna interrupted her, laughing through her tears, and Maria Petrovna grew angry.

" If a wife speaks like that about her husband, no good will ever come of it ! " And she began to defend her son-in-law with all her might, and in the end it appeared, according to her own words, that a better man than Ivan Mikhailovich could not be found the world over. " Just look at others, little mother ! Take, for instance, the husband of Kapitolina Ivanovna ! And it is nothing to her, my lady. She does not complain ; she suffers in silence, and would not even think of dubbing her husband ' stupid, ' as you are doing. Of course, what we have we are careless of ; and once we lose it, we cry ! "

Nevertheless, she could get no explanation of what had occurred, and could only take refuge in guesswork and surmise.

She did not go to sleep until the return of her son-in-law, and sitting in the drawing-room on the sofa, she continually pondered over what now most interested her, letting escape from time to time an exclamation.

And Ivan Mikhailovich, after he had supped and taken an extra glass or two, came home and announced himself by a ring so angry and imperious that it sounded noisily through the quiet rooms, and frightened Maria Petrovna. " He must be drunk, " she thought, and opening the door, she did not even sigh as usual, but spoke lovingly, " There is some supper left for you in the dining-room. "

Ivan Mikhailovich did not reply. He passed through the rooms with protesting step, banged the doors, coughed loudly, and, in

general, gave one to understand that he was his own master. And still more to emphasise his independence, he did not go to sleep in the superb double bed with its silver ornaments, but lay down on the sofa in his study under the reindeer antlers and the rifle from which he had never fired a shot.

"Here, at least take a pillow!" came Maria Petrovna's meek voice from the other side of the door, and the white corner of a pillow was thrust through the slightly open door of the study. Her son-in-law did not reply. "It is uncomfortable to lie that way, your neck will hurt you."

"Don't you trouble yourself about my neck!" came from the bear's den.

But Maria Petrovna threw the pillow on an easy chair, and the door closed. Ivan Mikhailovich was a man who prided himself on the strength of his character, and therefore did not take the pillow, but supported his head with his fist, and puffed while he thought of the oppressive disagreeableness of married life.

The dog Norma evidently took the part of the husband, for whenever the couple quarrelled and occupied different bedrooms, the dog would not stay with the wife.

Opening the door of the study with her paw, she approached the sofa, placed her black muzzle on Ivan Mikhailovich's breast, and gazed at him with eyes that wished to say: "What hags they are, all of them! They even do not know how to appreciate a man like you!" Ivan Mikhailovich felt a silent gratitude toward Norma, and patted her with his hand, pulling lovingly at her long ears. But the door of the study again opened slightly, and from the other side came the whisper of Maria Petrovna: "Norma! Norma!" But Norma did not go. Ivan Mikhailovich held her by the collar and patted her with redoubled energy. "She will let in fleas," again came the low voice. "Norma! Norma!"

Ivan Mikhailovich sprang from the sofa, closing the door tightly, and the melodious sound of the lock ended the diplomatic overtures of his mother-in-law.

"Sleeps with the dog. A fine thing that!" said the grumbling voice behind the door, and all became quiet.

These were scenes with dramatic elements and effects in them. But there were other scenes of the ordinary sort, without the dramatic effects, scenes which were repeated regularly in the same form and in the very same expressions.

These scenes always took place on the twentieth of the month, when Ivan Mikhailovich received his salary, and the large number of small creditors had to be paid. Somehow there was never sufficient money to settle all the bills, and each time Ivan Mikhailovich thought that the money ought to be enough to cover all

expenses, and railed at the womenfolk who dreamed so much about the emancipation of women, while they did not even know how to regulate their own household. "Emancipation!" he grumbled, taking the money from his pocket-book and throwing it on the table.

"But what has emancipation to do with this?"

"They go and teach you the devil-knows-what—all kinds of geography, algebra, trigonometry, but you do not know how to make both ends meet—emancipation!"

"And you should go a little less to the club, Ivan Mikhailovich, then probably the income would cover the expenditure!" replied Maria Petrovna biting.

"And where, pray, can I get it for you? I am not coining money. I suppose you know I am not a counterfeiter?"

And all three started to upbraid and reproach each other, and for a moment they became submerged in such trivialities and unpleasantness that they were afterward thoroughly ashamed of themselves. After every twentieth of the month there remained in the soul of Xenia Pavlovna a kind of soot; and this greasy soot dimmed her eyes, made her apathetic and slow, and it seemed as if she had all at once become old, ill-looking, and disheartened. This young and very charming woman looked at such times like a beautiful bouquet of flowers that had withered and been thrown out of the window. So they lived day after day, months and years, and when an acquaintance asked, "How are you getting along?" they invariably replied: "Very well, thank you!"

It sometimes became necessary to refresh themselves after this kind of life—to depart, at least for a day, from the beaten track—and so Ivan Mikhailovich went on a short spree two or three times a year. "One must overhaul himself thoroughly from time to time; it is not only useful, but necessary," he usually said on the next day after such an exploit.

The only thing that ever brightened Xenia Pavlovna's life a little was going to the theatre. This happened so seldom, however, that she looked upon such rarely occurring occasions in the light of important events. Ivan Mikhailovich did not like to go to the theatre, and when Xenia Pavlovna said, "We ought to go to the theatre and refresh ourselves a little," Ivan Mikhailovich was sure to remember how, ten years before, when they visited St. Petersburg on their honeymoon, they had been to the opera and the drama, and would reply: "After seeing Figner and Mme. Savina, it is not worth while, my dear, to go to see such small fry, and it only spoils an impression for us!"

But whenever *Faust* was presented on the stage of the local theatre, no pleadings were necessary: Ivan Mikhailovich never

failed to take seats in the third row of the orchestra for himself and Xenia Pavlovna.

"To-day we go to see *Faust*," he said in an angry tone on returning from the bank, carelessly throwing two coloured tickets upon the table.

"*Faust*!" joyfully exclaimed Xenia Pavlovna, and her face became radiant with joy.

Gay and exalted with the pleasure that awaited her, Xenia Pavlovna usually began to get ready very early. And while she was dressing and combing her hair, Ivan Mikhailovich stood close by to see that it was all done properly, because when he appeared with his wife in society he liked everything to be "just so," and was pleased to have every one think, as they saw her pass on his arm, "A charming woman that! Really charming!" Therefore he was a very stern critic, and while she dressed he continually vexed her by his remarks: "Your coiffure is too small! You have the face of a Marguerite, and you dress your hair to make you look like a Jewess!"

"It is not true!"

"A curious thing, really: women understand less than any one else what is becoming to them and they care least of all to win the admiration of their husbands!"

Xenia Pavlovna also wished to look well; but she did not trust overmuch to the good taste of Ivan Mikhailovich, and at the same time distrusted herself too; and the upshot of it all was that they invariably quarrelled, and left the house sulking and displeased with each other. Deeply aggravated and disheartened, they went to the theatre without any pleasurable anticipation, as if some one were driving them thither. First they walked arm in arm, feeling angry with each other, and longing to pull their arms away and walk apart; then Ivan Mikhailovich called a cabman in an angry voice that seemed to hate all the cabbies in the world. Having helped his wife into the vehicle, he sat down by her side and placed his arm around her waist. The whole way they never exchanged a word, but Ivan Mikhailovich gave vent to his irritation in a shower of abuse directed at the poor cabby: "Careful there! Don't you see the hollows, you stupid!"—"To the right, you dolt!"

The orchestra played the overture from *Faust*. Ivan Mikhailovich and his wife walked arm in arm through the long, carpeted aisle between two long rows of orchestra stalls toward their seats. Ivan Mikhailovich felt as if all eyes were directed toward him, and he tried to walk with greater dignity, with his head proudly thrown back and his rounded paunch thrown forward. Xenia Pavlovna walked with downcast eyes and a face which looked rigidly cold

and offended, as if she had been sentenced to die and were walking toward the gallows. The electric lights went out; the curtain rose upon a sea looking very much like a sky and a sky very much like a sea, with some sort of fantastic ruins and tropical vegetation. The traditional Faust, in his brown dressing-gown, night-cap, and long, grey beard, sang in his metallic tenor voice, smoothing his beard with his hand:

"Accursed be human science, human prayer, human faith!"

At first Xenia Pavlovna was not much affected by either the music or the singing. She looked more than she listened. When the red Mephistopheles appeared and sang that everything was well with him, and that he had plenty of money, Xenia Pavlovna remembered that it would soon be the twentieth and that they owed the butcher for two months. "Emancipation!" she seemed to hear Ivan Mikhailovich exclaiming, and when she stopped thinking of the butcher and emancipation, Faust had already thrown off his dressing-gown and beard, and had changed from a decrepit old man into a handsome, strong youth, and this unexpectedness called forth the first smile upon her lips.

"To me returned lovely youth!" victoriously sang Faust, approaching the footlights and raising his hand, and Xenia Pavlovna began to think how old she was and how old Ivan Mikhailovich was; that their youth had already passed, and would nevermore return. Xenia Pavlovna sighed and stealthily glanced at Ivan Mikhailovich's face. He sat deep in his chair, with head bent to one side and his hands locked over his paunch, and in his well-groomed face, with its waxed and twisted moustaches, there was so much self-sufficiency and native sleekness that Xenia Pavlovna hurriedly turned away.

During the first *entr'acte* they went into the lobby of the theatre, she leaning on his arm, and he feeling uneasy the whole time at the thought that his wife's hair was badly dressed, and that her face was not alight with the joy and rapture of the other women, who, with their sparkling eyes and rustling skirts, laughed and talked incessantly in their ringing, happy voices.

After walking a little up and down the spacious lobby, engrossed in their own thoughts, the pair returned to their seats. Under the cascades of electric light, the stalls dazzled the eyes with the beautiful dresses of the ladies, and buzzed like a beehive from the multitude of noises, motions, and rustling; but this talk, glitter, and dazzle seemed to Xenia Pavlovna distant and strange, and the walls of people, the boxes resembling rich bouquets of flowers, awakened in her a feeling of loneliness and remoteness. She sat with her hands lying listlessly on her lap and with downcast eyes; she did not wish to be disturbed in her present brooding mood, and feared that some acquaintance might approach them and ask

how they were, or that Ivan Mikhailovich might suddenly begin to compare the singers with those they had once heard.

When the lights went out and the curtain rose again she felt a great relief, and it suddenly seemed to her that she was once more in her maiden bower and had locked the door on the outside world. Gazing at the scene before her, she was gradually carried away into the realm of sound and melody, and wholly surrendered herself to the vague, disturbing emotions that had arisen in her soul under the influence of music and song. The rancour and vexation she had felt toward her husband gradually subsided; the memory of the harsh wrangles, petty disputes, all the tiresome prosiness of her daily life, vanished, and an exquisite calm and tranquillity took possession of her soul, brightening and clearing up everything within her. In the third act the soul of Xenia Pavlovna flew away from her native town, and she forgot herself and everybody else, and wholly surrendered herself to the power of music and song, to the moonlit night, the silvery shimmer of the stars, and the contemplation of a happy love, which waxed stronger and stronger, seemingly measureless and all-powerful, but at the same time full of a sadness and pensiveness as quiet and gentle as this moonlit night itself, and as this exquisite young girl before her, with her thick, long braid of golden hair, who, with the sincerity and straightforwardness of a child, was kneeling before her handsome, youthful lover, pleading with him for mercy. Here she stands flooded by the radiant moonlight, trembling with fear and happiness, her head resting on the shoulder of the handsome youth. Here she sings at the wide-open window, telling the stars, the quiet night, and the slumbering old garden, that seems to have been enchanted by dreams of love, of her happiness; and her song, pure and sacred like a prayer, soars upward to the starry, blue heavens.

How very dear and near this is to people who have lived through the phantom of happiness. She, Xenia Pavlovna, had once been just such a sweet girl, with a thick, golden braid hanging down her back; she had been just as happy and free of care, and sang just as sweetly to the stars and the silent garden flooded with the mysterious, sad moonlight, and she also, just as this maiden, had trembled with fear and pleaded with the man she loved for mercy.

"Ha! ha! ha! ha!" rolled the thundering laugh of Mephistopheles—such pitiless, powerful, and provoking laughter; and the chord, which echoed in Xenia Pavlovna's heart with inexpressible tenderness and sadness, broke and grew silent, leaving room only for this laughter, oppressive and revolting in its triumphant triviality and truth. And reality suddenly broke into the realm of dreams and fancies. Xenia Pavlovna lowered her eyes, compressed her

lips, and a smile passed over her face, the strange smile of a person who has been caught unawares.

"He laughs first-rate!" remarked Ivan Mikhailovich in an earnest voice, slightly moving in his chair.

Xenia Pavlovna looked at her husband and sighed sorrowfully. She had already resigned herself to Ivan Mikhailovich, to his pompous solemnity, and his hands crossed over his paunch. Those hands no longer awakened her ire. Once this very same man who now sat by her side was *her* Faust, and with him was closely bound up her love-drama. Even if it had been a mirage, a mistake, it was the mistake of her whole life, a mistake which would never be repeated—like youth itself.

The curtain came down. The noise of applause, like a rainstorm, and the wild roar of the over-enthusiastic gallery filled the theatre from top to bottom. The curtain rose once more on the sea and the ruins, and Faust, Marguerite, and Mephistopheles appeared holding each other's hands, bowing and smiling to the public; and Xenia Pavlovna felt as if she had been suddenly awakened from a sleep full of tender, delicious dreams, vague and enchanting, but already forgotten, and felt vexed because she was awakened, and was now possessed by a tormenting longing to recall and bring back the frightened-off dreams.

She did not want to look at Marguerite, who had suddenly turned into an actress, thirsting for hand-clapping and making eyes at that huge monster the public; at Mephistopheles, who stood with his right hand pressed to his breast as a token of gratitude and sincere pleasure; nor at Faust, who suddenly looked very much like a hair-dresser, and who was sending in all directions sweet, airy kisses.

"Come, Vania!"

Ivan Mikhailovich rose and offered her his arm, and they once more repaired to the lobby. Here he treated her to tea and fruits. "It is splendid for allaying thirst!" he said, handing her an orange. And from this moment all animosity was forgotten, and peace reigned once more between them.

"Not sour, I hope?"

"No, it is very good."

Xenia Pavlovna ate her orange, and gazed at the men who passed them. "They are all different here from what they are at home," she thought; "they are all rude, all go to their clubs, and my Vania is in reality much better than many of these men."

"How did you like Marguerite, Vania?"

"Pretty well—though, after Alma Fostrem, she is, of course——"

"Have you heard Alma in that rôle?"

"Well, I like that, really! Did we not hear her together at St. Petersburg? Have you forgotten already?"

"Ah, that was so long ago."

"Though this opera is immortal by itself, I have seen it over a hundred times, and will be glad to see it as many times more. Here one sees life as in a mirror— Yes— Do you remember—in the garden?" he concluded in a low voice, leaning toward his wife.

Xenia Pavlovna's face was covered with a slight blush, and her eyes had a thoughtful, far-away look in them, which gradually grew sad and dreamy.

"All this was, but it has passed as if in a dream," her lips whispered, and her head swayed on her beautiful bare neck.

Here some acquaintances passed, and pressing their hands warmly, enquired:

"How are you?"

"Very well, thank you. And you?"

"Pretty well, as usual. But you, Xenia Pavlovna, still continue to grow more beautiful!"

Xenia Pavlovna blushed, and a hardly perceptible shade of pleasure flitted over her face, and made it sweet and strong and proud.

"What are you saying!" she replied, slightly screwing up her eyes and coquettishly fanning herself. "On the contrary, I think I am growing worse-looking with each passing day!"

Then all the men began to protest in chorus, and the women silently fixed their coiffures with their fingers, while Ivan Mikhailovich looked at his wife and thought that she was really a very lovely woman, probably one of the loveliest in the whole theatre, and he also began to feel very pleased, and twirling his moustaches, he spoke proudly:

"You ought to see her portrait when she was my fiancée! It hangs over my desk. She had a braid twice as thick as this Marguerite's—"

In the last scene a whole revolution took place in the soul of Ivan Mikhailovich. He began to imagine Xenia Pavlovna overtaken by the sad fate of Marguerite, and himself in the rôle of Faust, and grew very sorry for Xenia Pavlovna. The gloomy arches of the prison, on the grey stone floor some straw, and on it this woman, outraged, criminal, insane, and nevertheless so pure and saintly; the low melodies so full of sadness and tenderness in which arose hazy memories of past happiness, made Ivan Mikhailovich's breath come faster. He looked at Xenia Pavlovna, and noticing tears in her eyes, felt that this woman was very dear to him and that he was somehow very guilty toward her.

Ivan Mikhailovich sadly gazed upon the stage, listened to the low strains of music, and it seemed to him at times that it was his Xenia thrown into prison, and he recalled how they first met at a ball and

how he at the conclusion of it sang : " Amid the noisy ball," and how afterward they sat in the dark garden, listening to the singing of the nightingale and gazing at the silvery stars.

All this was, but it had passed as if in a dream.

They returned from the theatre with souls refreshed, overfilled with sadness mingled with joy, and it seemed to both as if all their former disputes and frictions over trivialities had vanished for evermore, and a part of their former happiness had returned to them. They rode home dashingly in a light, new sleigh over the well-beaten road, and Ivan Mikhailovich had his arm round Xenia Pavlovna's waist as tightly as if he feared to lose her on the way. Xenia Pavlovna hid her face in the soft white fur of her collar, and only her sparkling eyes were visible from under a very becoming little hat of the same white fur, like two coals, dark and moist.

Ivan Mikhailovich wanted to kiss her, forgetting that they were in the open road, but Xenia Pavlovna screwed up her eyes, in which lurked silent laughter and slightly shook her white fur hat.

At home the samovar and Maria Petrovna awaited them.

The samovar gurgled joyfully, rising importantly in all its beauty and sparkle from the snow-white of the tablecloth ; the nice white loaves of bread smelled good and very tempting ; and fresh, soft-boiled eggs seemed just waiting to be cracked over the nose with a spoon. And Maria Petrovna, sailing out of the nursery with her old wrap over her shoulders, spoke kindly : " Well, children, you must be quite hungry ? "

Ivan Mikhailovich did not reply. He entered the dimly lighted drawing-room and paced it with a slow tread, smoothed his hair with the palm of his hand and purred : " Angel, Angel Marguerite ! "

Then he returned to the dining-room, approached Xenia Pavlovna, silently kissed her on the head, and again went into the drawing-room where he continued purring.

" You had better eat and leave ' Angel Marguerite ' for after," said Maria Petrovna, thrusting her head into the doorway of the drawing-room.

" In a moment ! In a moment ! " Ivan Mikhailovich replied with vexation, and continued walking, wholly surrendering himself to vague emotions and recollections and the feeling of tender sadness for the past.

Afterward they all three had tea and spoke very amiably, and a good and peaceful feeling filled their hearts. Xenia Pavlovna changed her evening dress for a white gown with sleeves like wings and let down her hair. She visited the nursery several times, and sinking on her knees before the three little beds, she gazed with mother's passion and tenderness at the sleeping babies with their full, chubby little arms and sweet, calm faces, and it seemed to her

that here were sleeping the little angels, pure, gentle, helpless, and great in their purity, that had carried Marguerite into heaven.

"You look like Marguerite in prison," remarked her husband, leaning on his arm and gazing at his wife long and attentively ; and it seemed to him as if a whole chapter of his life had disappeared, and before him was a sweet, young maiden with golden hair, whom one longed to love, to adore for ever.

And under this glance Xenia Pavlovna lowered her eyes, smiled, and felt that somewhere far down at the very bottom of her soul the broken, unfinished song of her youthful heart sounded like a mountain echo.

Ivan Mikhailovich, who, generally supping at home in his shirt sleeves, now felt constrained to take off his coat, endeavoured to lend to his gestures and motions as much elegance and grace as possible, and was amiable and courteous at table, even to his mother-in-law.

"Shall I hand you the butter ? " he asked, anticipating her wish.

"You are acting just as if you had come on a visit," Maria Petrovna remarked, and, taking the butter with a pleasant smile, said : "Thank you !"

"Well, good night, my Marguerite !" said Ivan Mikhailovich, approaching his wife and once more gazing attentively into her eyes ; then he kissed her hand and cheek.

"Good night, my Faust !" jokingly replied Xenia Pavlovna, kissing her husband on the lips.

Then Ivan Mikhailovich pressed Maria Petrovna's hand and went into the bedroom.

The blue hanging-lamp flooded the chamber with a soft, tender, soothing, bluish light, and it was so peaceful and cosy. Ivan Mikhailovich undressed, and, taking off his boots, still continued to sing from *Faust* in a tender falsetto :

'Tis life alone to be near thee,
Thine only, all thine own !

EUGENE N. CHIRIKOV

STRAINED RELATIONS

MISHA maintained a stubborn silence. He had had no desire whatever to speak. When he was called to dinner he refused categorically :

" I don't want any. . . .

When he was called to tea, he replied calmly, with firm conviction in his voice :

" Have your tea or coffee, or whatever it is, but let me alone ; I don't want anything."

Misha's elder sister burst out into an unnaturally loud peal of laughter on receiving this reply and said :

" Do you think any one cares ? You can give up eating and drinking altogether if you like ; we shan't cry about it."

With this she fluttered out gaily and disappeared behind the door. Misha, however, discerned in her exaggeratedly careless reply, as well as in her gay exit, a certain sympathy with his cause. Of course, she was pretending, making believe that papa and mamma " didn't care " that he had no dinner or tea. . . . Of course they were all concerned about him, and did not know what to do to make him take his dinner and tea. . . . Let them worry. . . . It was their own fault. . . . Getting only one mark in Latin was not so terrible as to merit being disgraced before everybody and told that he was only fit to be a shoemaker . . . as for being a shoemaker, well, he did not care . . . but all the same he was not going to eat his dinner.

Misha was sitting in the drawing-room, reading a magazine and listening to what was going on in the next room. They were no doubt talking about him there, saying that he would not eat or drink, and that after all he was " a clever boy."

" Where is Michael ? . . . Still sulking ? " he hears his mother say.

" He is angry," Nina put in slowly and deliberately.

" We must leave him something, anyhow," he hears in his father's deep voice.

"Leave me something, eh! . . . As if I want it!" says Misha.
"Why leave things for a shoemaker?"

"Michael!" his father calls.

Misha is silent. His father calls again.

"What do you want?" Misha replies with austere dignity, bending lower over his magazine.

"Come here! Stop sulking. . . ."

"I am not sulking; I am reading. . . . It isn't proper for a shoemaker to sit at table."

"Blockhead!"

"All right then, I'm a blockhead," Misha burst out aloud, and added softly, "You'll hear from the blockhead."

"He's angry," his sister said loudly.

"Shut up, you little fool!" Misha whispered, and an intense hatred towards his sister possessed him. He longed for revenge. . . . If only his father were not there. . . . Why did she interfere? No one asked her opinion! He coughed angrily, threw the magazine on the table, and, searching in his pockets, pulled out a pencil. Under one of the pictures representing a young man under a bench with a young girl standing by—the text explaining that he is carving her name underneath, it being already carved all over the top of the bench—he wrote, "This is Nina and Volodka Petushkov; two big fools." He left the magazine open at this page so that every one could see it, and went to his room. Catching sight of Nina's hat on the table he threw it on the floor.

"I won't have this rubbish on my table!" he shouted, though there was no one to hear him. Misha felt at enmity with everybody. It seemed to him that the house was divided into two hostile camps, in one of which was himself, Misha, while the other contained the rest of the household. Thus when the housemaid came into the room and addressed him, he turned to her in a hostile manner.

"Michael Pavlitch!"

"Get out!"

"There's a visitor for you!"

"Get out, I tell you!"

"You've had no dinner, that's why you're angry. . . ."

Misha knew quite well that the maid had been sent in to him. He felt sorry and wanted to make amends. . . . Yet he was not a baby. . . . Let them worry! But he really was hungry. Should he go down to the kitchen? No, it was not worth it; the cook was sure to tell the housemaid, who would tell his parents, and they would feel consoled.

It was better to bear his hunger. If his father or mother came and said: "Don't be angry, Misha. . . . you know that if you don't eat and drink you'll fall ill, and that would upset us. . . . I'm sorry

this has happened, it won't occur again,"—then Misha would have agreed, and would have gone instantly into the dining-room. Of course they had left something for him. There was beetroot soup that day. . . . Misha swallowed the saliva that had risen, and going to the door listened for the sound of his mother's step. Father, of course, would not come, but mother might come and say she was sorry. . . .

But mother did not come, and he was hungry. Instead of the expected delegate, Falstaff, the beautiful setter, appeared at the door. With slow measured pace he walked into the room, sniffed at Misha, and wagged his tail. Falstaff was papa's favourite, and his place was under the writing-table in papa's study. Why did he come here? Let him go to his master and wag his tail. He had eaten so much that he looked on the point of bursting.

"Get out!" Misha said suddenly, in an angry whisper, giving the dog a kick. It whined, then shook its tail as though offended, and trotted out. And Misha was hungry. . . .

For a long time he sucked the fingers of his left hand, seriously considering his position. At last he got a brilliant idea that would deliver him from all compromise with the enemy. Ivanov, a boy in his own form, had once sold his brother's Algebra book and had bought himself a penknife with the proceeds. . . .

And Misha could sell his last year's books and get some pies and pastries at the pastry-cook's. . . . He could even go to the milk shop . . . and here they would be worrying. . . . Well, let them worry! It was their own fault. . . . They would treat him better another time. . . .

Hunting in his bookcase, Misha pulled out a thin book. . . . "I may want it, but not very soon. . . . By that time they will have forgotten that I had it and will buy me a new one," Misha thought—and finally decided to sell it.

He did not want to go out through the dining-room . . . they were all in there, and would think that he was seeking for an excuse to make it up. . . . Not he! . . . He could get on very well without doors. . . .

He climbed out of the window, hid the book in his bosom, and set out for the market. It was getting towards evening—the shops would be shut soon . . . it was necessary to hurry. . . . Misha flew like the wind. . . . He tried to make a short cut across some half-built houses. . . . The result was a most conspicuous hole in his boot. At another time he would have been quite upset by this accident, as the boots were new ones and had been given him with the warning that he was to take care of them. . . . Now he did not care! Let them buy new ones! Of course they would say he could go barefoot like a shoemaker. . . . But he knew very well they would buy them. . . . It would be too disgraceful for the son of a lawyer

to be seen in torn boots. . . . There was no need to worry . . . they would buy them. . . . At last, there was the market-place. It was gay and lively. . . . What a racket . . . screaming, quarrelling . . . a perfect pandemonium.

"Hot p-p-pies!" yelled a broad-faced, greasy-nosed peasant in a nasal voice. He looked at Misha and asked:

"Do you want any pies?"

"What are they made of?" Misha asked.

"Buy mine, sonny; his are cold and mine are hot!" squeaked a peasant woman, as she stood up holding the earthen-pots containing the hot pies. . . .

"I will buy some presently. I have no time now," said Misha, as he pushed his way through the dirty, motley crowd, to the quarter where were the second-hand book shops. In great trepidation he approached a dealer. The latter was standing by his counter in an expectant attitude; an old man with a grave air, he looked more like a professor than a shopkeeper. Catching sight of the schoolboy, he hid himself behind the counter and, opening a book, pretended to read.

"Do you buy books?"

"What have you to sell?"

"Asia, Africa, and America! quite new," Misha gasped out.

"Smirnov's?"

"Yes."

"Had it been Europe, now, I might have bought it, but I've a lot of these," the shopman said, reluctantly taking the book from Misha.

"It is an old edition. . . . I'll give you ten kopeks for it," he added, turning over a few pages of the book.

"I was told to sell it for not less than twenty," Misha said diffidently.

The shopkeeper yawned and handed the book back to Misha.

"Fifteen then . . . it's quite new!"

The shopkeeper made no reply.

"Very well, then, I'll take ten kopeks."

"And a good bargain you're making," the shopkeeper said, yawning as he put the ten kopeks on the counter and threw the book carelessly on to a shelf. Then he turned back to the book he was reading.

"I may perhaps bring Europe too," said Misha, as he put the money into his pocket.

"Do . . . only is it like this one? Any other is not worth ten kopeks. Send all your friends to me. I give better value than any one. . . ."

"I will send them"

Misha walked out of the shop and began to examine the eatables

on the stalls. Before he got to the pies he was tempted by some halva and poppy seeds. He bought some for three kopeks and ate it with great relish. Then he got to the pie-woman.

"What kind are they?"

"Mushroom, meat, and carrot."

"How much?"

"Two for five kopeks."

"I don't like carrots. Give me one mushroom and one meat pie."

After eating the two pies he felt thirsty. With the last two kopeks he bought two tankards of some kind of pink kvas. He could hardly finish the second glass. . . . It was nasty and too sweet—still it was a pity to leave it.

"Oof!" Misha exclaimed, finishing the second tankard with difficulty.

"What's the matter, has it gone to your head?" the stall-keeper asked boastfully, and then went on with his loud singing cry of:

"Sweet, refreshing kvas!"

When he got home, Misha found on his table a plate of cold meat, some bread, a glass of milk, and three muffins. The only thing that tempted him was the muffins, of which he was very fond, but his pride would not allow him to eat them. If he were sure they did not remember how many they had given him—whether it was two or three—he might have eaten one. He carefully cut off a strip from each and ate them. He took a sip of the milk. It was very nice. . . . But no! He would not have any more. . . .

The pink kvas really got into his head, and the halva and poppy seeds, the pies of mushrooms and bad meat disturbed his stomach.

"Fohh! Horrible!" he exclaimed angrily, and from time to time spat on the floor.

"Where have you been?" Nina asked, appearing at the door.

"That's my business. I don't ask you where you gad about."

In passing Nina glanced at the table where stood Misha's dinner, untouched.

"Mamma said you were to eat the meat!"

"I've no need to eat. I'm a blockhead and a shoemaker. . . . You are all lawyers . . . and it doesn't matter about a blockhead!"

"As you please!"

"Very well! You can go out for a walk with your Petushkov and leave me alone. . . ."

"Idiot!" she snapped irritably and went out.

Misha felt capable of withstanding the siege by his enemies, and of repelling their assaults, by his complete indifference to food. The mushroom and meat pies, the halva and poppy seeds were to be his allies.

This might have continued perhaps for quite a long time, had not

an unforeseen incident put an end to the mutually strained relations. Misha had a stomach-ache and it grew worse as time went on. The pain compelled him to lie face downwards on the bed. He did not want to betray his disarmed position, and for some time controlled himself and stifled his groans in the pillow. But the mushroom pies and the sweet refreshing kvas did their work. He groaned aloud and beat the pillow with his hands.

"Oh, what a punishment!" he said plaintively from time to time, kicking his feet. Towards evening, no longer able to control himself, he cried aloud, and all his enemies rushed to his bedside—all excepting his father, who was usually at his club at that hour. His mother took his temperature, his sister Nina got the mustard-pot, the housemaid ran for the doctor, even Falstaff came to see the invalid and, making his way among the bustling enemies, looked sadly and sympathetically at Misha with large, intelligent eyes.

"What have you done?" the mother asked in a state of alarm, fearing in the bottom of her heart that he had taken poison, as he had threatened to do at other periods of strained relationship.

"Did you take anything? Misha, tell me! There's a dear! Tell me quickly!"

"Mamma! Oh! oh! oh! Mamma, I sold Asia, Africa, and America . . . oh! oh! oh! . . . and bought some mushroom pies. . . ."

"What is the matter? Misha! My God, he is delirious! Send to the club for father! Oh, my God!"

His mother bent over Misha, put her hand on his forehead, and kissed his cheek. His sister, with tears in her eyes, ran about the room, and going up to the window looked out anxiously to see if the doctor were coming. At last the doctor arrived.

"Well, young man, where does it hurt? Turn over, please!"

Misha turned over obediently. The doctor examined him.

"What have you eaten to-day?"

"He hasn't eaten anything to-day, doctor. He hasn't had a bite since he got back from school."

"That is not wise. . . . All the same, young man, perhaps you have eaten something after all. Tell me frankly. . . ."

"Yes, I ate some mushroom pies. . . . I sold Asia, Africa . . ."

"What is the matter?" asked the alarmed father in a whisper, jumping out of the cab that had brought him from his club where he had abandoned an unfinished rubber.

An hour later, all the house was still. Misha, with a poultice on his stomach, lay in bed, and near him sat his mother and sister. They both fussed around him and obediently fulfilled his most capricious wants.

The pain had ceased, and Misha began to feel entirely satisfied.

DMITRI S. MEREJKOVSKY

B. 1864

LOVE IS STRONGER THAN DEATH

THE Florentine citizens of the old family of Alмеры belonged from time immemorial to two different trade corporations: some of them worshipped the protector of the butchers, Saint Antony; the others had on their banner the image of a lamb and were engaged in the woollen trade. Like their ancestors, the brothers Giovanni and Matteo Alмеры belonged to these corporations. Giovanni dealt in meat in the old market-place—the Mercato Vecchio; and Matteo had wool mills on the Arno. Buyers came willingly into Giovanni's meat-store, not only because they could always find there fresh ham, tender veal, and fat geese, but also because they liked the storekeeper for his cheerful disposition and his smooth tongue. No one knew how to exchange a pointed joke with a casual passer-by, a neighbour or a customer so cleverly as the butcher Alмеры; no one spoke with such ease of everything under the sun—of the diplomatic blunders of the Florentine Republic, of the intentions of the Turkish Sultan, of the plots of the French king. Very few people ever took offence at the butcher's jokes, and to those who did he cited the old proverb: "A good neighbour is not defamed by a joke, and the tongue is sharpened on a jest, like a razor."

His brother Matteo, the wool merchant, was of a different character. He was a shrewd, politic man, always somewhat stern and taciturn; he conducted his affairs better than the careless and good-natured Giovanni, and every year two of his ships, laden with wool, left the harbour of Livorno for Constantinople. He had very high ambitions and regarded his business as the road toward a government position. He always paid court to the aristocrats—the "fat people," as they were called in Florence—and he cherished the hope of elevating the Alмеры family, perhaps even of seeing his name borne aloft on the wings of immortal fame. Matteo often urged his brother to give up his meat business, because it was not sufficiently aristocratic, and to add his money to Matteo's capital.

But Giovanni would not take his counsel. While he respected his brother's ability, he secretly feared him ; and though he did not say it openly, he thought : " Honey tongue, heart of gall."

One hot day Giovanni came home from his shop very tired. He ate a hearty supper as usual, and drank plenty of cold wine. Suddenly he was stricken with apoplexy—for he was a very stout, short-necked man. That night he passed away, before he had had time to take the communion or to make his will. The widow, Mona Ursula, a modest, kind-hearted but rather stupid woman, entrusted her husband's business affairs to his brother Matteo, who knew how to deceive her by crafty and honeyed words. He convinced the simple-minded woman that the deceased, owing to his carelessness, had left his account books in disorder ; that he had died on the eve of bankruptcy, and that if she wished to save what was left, it was necessary to close the meat shop in the Mercato Vecchio. Evil tongues asserted that the cunning Matteo cheated the widow mercilessly, in order to direct the current of Giovanni's capital upon the wheels of the wool mills, in accordance with his old wish. However it was, one thing was certain : Matteo's affairs improved immensely from that time, and instead of two ships, he was now sending off to Constantinople five or six ships, laden with excellent Tuscan wool. He was soon promised the profitable and honourable post of standard-bearer of the wool corporation—the Florentine *Arte de Lana*.

The monthly allowance which he gave to his brother's widow was so small that she suffered much privation, particularly as she was not alone. She had a dearly beloved young daughter, Ginevra by name. In those days there were just as few suitors in Florence for a dowerless maiden as there are to-day ; but the devout Mona Ursula did not lose courage. She prayed fervently to all God's saints, especially to Saint Antony, the tireless and faithful protector of the butchers in this world and the next ; she cherished the hope that God, the defender of widows and orphans, would send to her dowerless daughter a good and worthy husband.

Besides, she had another right to expect such a thing. Ginevra was a remarkably beautiful girl. It was hard to believe that the stout, clumsy, merry Giovanni could have a daughter of such rare, tender charm. Ginevra always dressed in plain, dark clothes ; around her beautiful, long, slender neck there was a string of pearls on which hung an ancient cameo of chrysolite with the image of a centaur upon it. Her head-dress was a piece of muslin reaching to the centre of her forehead and so transparent that one could see through it the thick masses of pale golden hair. The gentle face of Ginevra was the face of the Madonna painted by Filippo Lippi, the Immaculate Virgin who appeared to Saint Bernard in the desert,

and with tender, long, wax-like fingers turned the pages of his books. There was an expression of the same endless innocence in the childish lips, in the calm, sad look, in the high, light eyebrows. And though there was about her the freshness of a convent lily, she seemed frail and short-lived, as though not at all created for life. When the butcher's daughter walked to church through the streets of Florence, modest, quiet, with lowered eyes, a prayer-book in her hands, the gay youths hastening to a banquet or a hunting-trip stopped their horses; their faces at once assumed an air of importance, their jesting and their laughter ceased, and for a long time they followed the beautiful Ginevra with their eyes.

Uncle Matteo, on hearing the praises of his niece's virtues, conceived a design to marry her to one of the secretaries of the Florentine Republic, Francesco dell' Agolanti. He was an elderly man, but one who was respected by all, and who had close connections with the rulers of the city at that time. Francesco was a great Latin scholar; he wrote his reports and documents in the bombastic style of Livy and Sallust. Somewhat stern and misanthropic by nature, he was irreproachably honest, like the ancient Romans. His face also was like the face of a senator of the days of the Republic, and he knew how to wear the long, dark red cloak of the Florentine officials like a real Roman toga. He loved the ancient languages so passionately that when the Greek language was in vogue in Tuscany, and the Byzantine scholar from Constantinople, Emanuel Chrizoloras, began to lecture on Greek grammar at the studio—the university of those days—Agolanti, notwithstanding that he was already a middle-aged man and secretary of the Florentine Republic, was not ashamed to sit beside small boys on the school bench. He soon mastered the Greek language so that he could read Aristotle's *Organon* and Plato's *Dialogues* in the original. In a word, the wool merchant, with his cunning and ambitious designs, could not conceive of a better or more advantageous relative. Matteo promised to give a fair dowry with his niece, on the condition that Agolanti was to unite his name and coat-of-arms with the name and coat-of-arms of Almeri.

Notwithstanding all these qualities of her suitor, Ginevra opposed her uncle's intentions for a long time and kept delaying the wedding from year to year. When Matteo at last demanded an immediate and decisive answer, she announced that she had another bridegroom, whom she loved better than Agolanti. To the great surprise and even fright of the devout Mona Ursula, she spoke the name of Antonio de Rondinelli, a young sculptor who had his workshop in one of the narrow side streets, near the Ponte Vecchio. Antonio had made the acquaintance of Ginevra in the house of her mother a few months before. He had asked for permission to make a wax

cast of the head of the young girl, desiring to use Ginevra's beauty for a carved image of the holy martyr Barbara, which was ordered from him by a rich convent in the outskirts of the city. Mona Ursula could not refuse the sculptor in such a religious matter, and while the work was going on the artist fell in love with his beautiful model. Then they met at the public festivals and at the winter gatherings, to which Ginevra was always eagerly invited, for her beauty made her welcome at every festival.

When Mona Ursula, excusing herself timidly and politely, informed Matteo that Ginevra had another bridegroom whom she loved, and when she mentioned the name of Antonio de Rondinelli, the wool merchant, although terribly enraged, assumed a calm, benevolent look, and addressing Mona Ursula, said in his quiet voice :

"Madonna, if I had not heard with my own ears that which you have told me just now, I should never believe that such a virtuous and sensible woman as you are would pay any attention to the passing whim of an inexperienced child. I don't know how it is done nowadays, but in my time young girls did not dare even to utter a single word as to the choice of a bridegroom. In everything they obeyed the will of the father or the guardian. Just consider the matter—who is this Antonio whom my niece has honoured by her choice? Is it possible that you do not know that sculptors, poets, actors, and street-singers are people who have nothing else to do and who could not conduct a more honourable and profitable business? They are the most light-minded and unreliable set of people to be found in the wide world, they are drunkards, libertines, idlers, atheists, squanderers of their own and other people's fortunes. As for Antonio, you surely must have heard what all Florence knows. I will simply mention to you one of his peculiarities—the round basket which hangs in his workshop on a rope, across a beam, so that one end of the rope is attached to the basket and the other to a nail in the wall. Into this basket Antonio throws all the money that he earns, without counting it. And any one who wishes, whether a pupil or an acquaintance, can come, pull down the basket without asking the owner's permission, and take as much money as he pleases—copper, silver, or gold. Do you think, Madonna, that I would intrust my money, the dowry I promised your daughter, to such a lunatic?

"But that is not all. Are you aware that Antonio cherishes the hideous atheism of the epicurean philosophy which is sown by the devil, that he does not go to church, that he scoffs at the holy sacraments, and does not believe in God? Good people have told me that he worships the marble fragments of the abominable pagan idols, the gods and goddesses they have recently begun to exhumé; that he worships these rather than the blessed relics and the

thaumaturgical images of the saints. I have also been told by other people that at night he and his pupils dissect dead bodies which he buys for a high price from the hospital guards, in order, as he claims, to study anatomy, the construction of the human body, the nerves, the muscles, and thus to perfect himself in his art; but in reality he does this, I think, to please his assistant and adviser, the immemorial foe of our salvation, the devil, who instructs him in the art of Black Magic. For it is only through charms, witchcraft, and diabolical suggestions that this heretic has won the heart of your innocent daughter."

With such words as these Uncle Matteo managed to frighten Mona Ursula and to convince her that he was right. When she told her daughter that in case she should positively refuse to marry Francesco dell' Agolanti, Uncle Matteo would stop giving them their monthly allowance, the young girl, filled with untold sorrow, submitted to her fate and expressed her willingness to obey her uncle's will.

During that year a great calamity had befallen Florence, a calamity which had been foretold by many astrologers because, in the sign of the Scorpion, Saturn had come too close to Mars. Several merchants who came from the East brought the germs of the plague in their large bales of valuable Indian rugs. A solemn procession marched through the streets, singing the plaintive *Miserere* and carrying the images of the saints. Laws were made prohibiting the unloading of refuse within the limits of the city, the tanneries and the slaughter-houses were forbidden to discharge refuse into the Arno, and measures were taken to keep the sick away from the community. Under penalty of a fine, of imprisonment, and, in certain cases, of death, the people were forbidden to keep in the house the bodies of those who had died during the day until sunset, or of those who had died during the night until sunrise, even if the relatives claimed that death was caused not by the plague but by some other disease. Special inspectors went around in the city at all times of the day or night to knock at the doors, to inquire whether there were any sick or dead in the house, and even to search, if they pleased. Here and there wagons smeared with pitch were seen in the smoke of the torches, accompanied by silent people in masks and black clothes, with long hooks with which they took up the plague-stricken bodies and threw them into the wagons, from afar, so as not to come close to the corpses. There were rumours that these men, whom the people called "black devils," picked up the bodies of those not yet dead, so as not to return to the same place again.

The plague, which began to rage toward the end of summer, continued until late in autumn, and even the winter colds, which set in early that year, did not check it. And so the well-to-do

people in Florence, who were not tied to the city by important affairs, hastened away to their villas, where the air was free from the germs of the plague.

Uncle Matteo, fearing that his niece might change her mind, hastened the wedding under the pretext that Mona Ursula and her daughter must leave the city as soon as possible, and that Francesco dell' Agolanti had offered to take both Ginevra and her mother to his beautiful villa on the slope of Monte Albano.

Matteo wished this, and it was so decided. The wedding was to take place within a few days. Then the ceremony was performed quietly, without any pomp, as was becoming in those sad days. At the wedding ceremony Ginevra stood pale, like a ghost, and her face was terribly calm. But her uncle hoped that these girlish whims would disappear soon after the wedding and that Francesco would know how to win the love of his young bride.

But his hopes were not to be realised. When the young bride, leaving the church, entered the house of her husband, she began to feel dizzy. Soon she sank to the ground as if dead. At first all thought that she had fainted. They tried to revive her, but her eyes remained closed, her breathing became weaker, her face and whole body turned deathly pale and her limbs grew cold. After a few hours a physician was summoned (at that time physicians were called unwillingly, for fear the rumour might spread that a plague-stricken person was in the house); but when he placed a mirror before Ginevra's lifeless lips not the slightest sign of a breath could be seen upon it.

Then all, seized with inexpressible grief and compassion, felt convinced that Ginevra was really dead. The neighbours said that God had punished Almery for having set the wedding at such an inappropriate time, and that the young bride of Francesco, immediately upon her return from church, had contracted the plague and died. These rumours spread rapidly, because the relatives of the girl, fearing the visit of the "black devils," concealed from everybody until the last moment the fact of Ginevra's fainting and death. But toward evening came the inspectors, who were informed by the neighbours of everything that had taken place in Agolanti's house, and they demanded that the relatives either give up the body of Ginevra or bury it immediately. Only when they were given a fair-sized bribe did they consent to leave the body in Francesco's house until the evening of the next day.

None of the relatives, however, doubted that Ginevra was dead, except her old nurse, whom everybody considered half-witted. With plaintive lamentations the old woman begged them not to bury Ginevra, asserting that the physicians were in error, that Ginevra was not dead at all, that she was sleeping; and she swore

that when she put her hand on the heart of her darling she "felt that it was beating weakly, weakly, more weakly than the wing of a butterfly."

The day went by, and as the young girl showed no signs of life, they put a shroud on her, placed her in a coffin and carried her away to the cathedral. The dry and spacious sepulchre, floored with smooth Tuscan bricks, was situated between two doors of the church, in one of the cemetery yards, under the shade of tall cypress trees, among the tombs of the noble families of Florence. Matteo paid a high price for this grave, but then the money was taken out of the dowry which was to have been given with Ginevra. The burial service was conducted in very solemn fashion. There were many wax candles, and in memory of Ginevra each of the poor was given a measure of barley and olive oil for half a soldo. Notwithstanding the cold weather and the terrors of the plague, a big crowd was present at the funeral; some, even strangers, on hearing the sad story of the young bride's death could not restrain their tears, and they repeated Petrarch's sweet line:

Death seemed beautiful on her beautiful face.

Francesco delivered an oration over the grave, using not only Latin quotations, but also Greek from Plato and Homer, which was something new in those days and pleased many of the listeners, even those who did not understand Greek.

There was some confusion at the end of the funeral ceremony, when the coffin was borne out of the cathedral and put in the sepulchre for the last kiss. A pale man in a silk mourning cloak came over to the dead girl, and lifting the crape from her face began to gaze at her with a steadfast look. He was asked to go away, and told that it was not proper for him, a stranger, to approach Ginevra before her relatives had taken leave of her. When the pale man heard that he was called "a stranger" and that Matteo and Francesco were called "relatives" he smiled bitterly, kissed the dead girl on the lips, lowered the crape over her face, and walked away without saying a word. The crowd began to whisper, pointing at him, calling the name of Antonio de Rondinelli, the man Ginevra loved and for whose sake she died.

Twilight was closing in, and as the funeral ceremony was over the crowd dispersed. Mona Ursula wished to pass the night by the coffin, but Uncle Matteo opposed this, for she was so overcome with grief that everybody feared for her life. Only Fra Mariano, a Dominican, remained in the sepulchre, where he had to read the prayers over the dead.

A few hours went by. The measured voice of the friar, and from time to time the slow striking of the clock on the tower of Giotto,

resounded in the stillness of the night. After midnight Fra Mariano began to feel thirsty. He drew forth a flask of wine, and tossing his head back, took a few sips with pleasure, when suddenly it seemed to him that he heard a sigh. He listened attentively; the sigh was heard once more, and this time it appeared to him that the tight crape on the dead girl's face stirred. A chill of terror shot through his frame, but as he was not inexperienced in such matters, and knew well that even experienced people alone with the dead at night imagine all sorts of things, he decided not to pay the slightest attention to the matter. He made the sign of the cross, and resumed reading the prayers in sonorous voice.

Suddenly the friar's voice broke off, he remained as petrified, his open eyes fixed upon the face of the dead girl. Now it was no longer a sigh, but a moan that came from her lips. Fra Mariano no longer doubted, for he saw that the breast of the dead girl was heaving and falling slowly, stirring the crape cover. She was breathing. Crossing himself, trembling in every limb, he rushed toward the door, and jumped out of the sepulchre. Brought to himself by the fresh air outside, and thinking once more that it was only his imagination, he whispered an Ave Maria, returned to the door, and looked into the sepulchre. A cry of horror burst from his lips. The dead girl was sitting up in the coffin with open eyes. Fra Mariano ran off across the cemetery without looking back, then through the Square of Baptistaria San Giovanni and over the Via Rikasoli. Only his wooden sandals striking against the ice-covered brick pavement broke the quiet of the night.

Ginevra Almery, awakening from sleep or from the deathlike fainting spell, examined the coffin with perplexity. At the thought that she was buried alive she was seized with terror. With a desperate effort she climbed out of the coffin, and muffling herself in the shroud went out of the door which had been left open by the friar.

She came out on the cemetery, then on the square before the cathedral. The light of the moon was falling through the rapidly moving clouds, which were rent asunder by the wind, and in this moonlight the marble tower of Giotto stood out distinctly. Ginevra's thoughts were confused, her head was reeling, it seemed to her that she and the tower would soon be carried away to the moonlit clouds; she could not understand whether she was alive or dead, whether it was all a dream or reality.

Not realising whither she was going, she passed through several deserted streets, noticed a familiar house, paused, walked over to the door and knocked. It was her Uncle Matteo's house.

The wool merchant, notwithstanding the late hour, was not asleep. He was awaiting a messenger with advices concerning two

vessels which were returning from Constantinople. Rumours were on foot that the storm had wrecked many ships not far away from the Livorno coast, and Uncle Matteo feared that his ships were among them. While waiting for the messenger he became hungry and ordered his servant Nencia, a pretty, red-haired girl, with freckles and milk-white teeth, to roast a capon for him. Uncle Matteo was an old bachelor. This night he was sitting in the kitchen by the fireplace, as it was cold in the other rooms. Nencia, red-faced, her sleeves rolled up, was broiling the capon, and the merry flame was reflected on the shiny clay of the cleanly washed pots and dishes which stood on the shelves.

"Nencia, do you hear anything?" said Matteo, listening attentively.

"It's the wind. I'll not go. You have already sent me out there three times."

"That's not the wind. Some one's knocking. That's the messenger. Go, open the door at once."

The stout Nencia began to walk down the steep wooden stairs lazily, and Uncle Matteo, standing at the head of the staircase, held a lantern over his head to light the way for her.

"Who's there?" asked the servant.

"It's I—I—Ginevra Almcry," replied a faint voice from behind the door.

"Jesu! Jesu! The evil spirit is with us!" muttered Nencia. Her feet began to tremble, and to save herself from falling she clasped the balustrade. Matteo grew pale and the lantern almost fell from his hands.

"Nencia, Nencia, open the door, quick!" implored Ginevra. "Let me warm myself. I am cold. Tell uncle that it is I——"

The servant girl, notwithstanding her stoutness, rushed up the staircase so fast that the steps creaked under her feet.

"There's your messenger! I told you you had better go to sleep like a good Christian! Oh, oh! Knocking again, do you hear? The poor soul is moaning—how plaintively she is moaning! O Lord, deliver us and have mercy on us sinners! Saint Lawrence, pray for us!"

"Listen, Nencia," said Matteo irresolutely. "I'll go down and see what is there. Who knows, perhaps——"

"What else will you do?" cried Nencia, clasping her hands. "Just think of him, what a brave man! You think that I'll let you go? You feel like going to the other world, do you? There's no use of your going anywhere; stay here, and be thankful nothing worse has happened to us."

Taking down a flask of holy water from the shelf, Nencia sprinkled it on the door of the house, on the staircase, over the kitchen and

on Matteo himself. He did not argue any longer with the wise servant and obeyed her, presuming that she knew better how to deal with ghosts. And Nencia pronounced an adjuration in a loud voice :

"Blessed soul, go with God—the dead to the dead. May God rest you in the world of the righteous !"

When Ginevra heard that she was spoken of as dead, she understood that she had nothing more to expect there. She got up from the threshold on which she had fallen exhausted, and staggered away in search of shelter.

Moving her frozen feet with difficulty, she reached the adjoining side street, where her husband, Francesco dell' Agolanti, lived.

The secretary of the Florentine Republic was at this time writing a long philosophical message in Latin to his friend in Milan, Mucio dell' Uberti, who was also an admirer of the ancient muses. It was a theological treatise entitled, "A Discourse on the Immortality of the Soul, in connection with the Death of My Beloved Wife, Ginevra Almery." Francesco compared the doctrine of Aristotle with the doctrine of Plato, refuting the opinion of Thomas Aquinas, who affirmed that the philosophy of Aristotle agreed with the dogmas of the Catholic Church concerning paradise, inferno, and purgatory ; while Francesco proved by many keen and weighty syllogisms that it was not at all the doctrine of Aristotle, who was secretly a sceptic and an atheist, but the doctrine of the great admirer of the gods, Plato, that was in accord with Christian faith.

The copper oil-lamp, fastened over the smooth board of his writing-table of carved wood, with numerous drawers and compartments for paper, ink, and quills, was burning with an even flame. The form of the lamp represented a Triton embracing Oceanides, for in all matters of everyday life Francesco loved to imitate the fine ancient models. Gold figures representing the dance of cupids or angels with wreaths of paradisean flowers flashed on the valuable parchment, which was as smooth as silk and as stiff as ivory.

Francesco was just beginning to analyse from a theological point of view the doctrine of metempsychosis. He alluded wittily to the Pythagoreans, who refuse to eat beans because they contain the souls of ancestors. Suddenly he heard a soft tapping on his door. He knitted his brow, for he could not bear noise while he was at work. Nevertheless he went over to the garret window, opened it, looked down on the street and in the pale light of the moon he saw the dead Ginevra muffled in her shroud.

Francesco forgot Plato and Aristotle, and shut the window so quickly that Ginevra had no time to utter a word. Then he began to whisper an Ave Maria and to make the sign of the cross in superstitious terror, like Nencia.

But he soon came to himself; he felt ashamed of his faint-heartedness when he recalled what the Alexandrian Neoplatonists, Proclus, and Porphyry, said of the appearance of the dead. Francesco soon mastered himself completely, and opening the window again he said in a firm voice :

"Whoever you may be, a spirit of heaven or of earth, begone ! Go back to the place whence you came, for it is in vain that you seek to frighten him whose mind is enlightened by the light of true philosophy. You may deceive my physical eyes, but you cannot deceive my spiritual eyes. Go in peace—the dead to the dead."

And he closed the window, this time not to open it even though a whole legion of pitiful visions should knock.

Ginevra started off, and as she was not far away from the old market-place, she soon found herself by the house of her mother.

Mona Ursula was kneeling before a crucifix, and beside her stood the stern friar Fra Giacomo, pale-faced, enfeebled by fasting. She lifted her terror-stricken eyes to him.

"What am I to do, father ? Help me. There is no submissiveness, no prayer in my soul. It seems that God has forsaken me, and my soul is doomed to perdition."

"Obey God in everything, to the end," the friar urged her, "Do not grumble ; calm the voice of the rebellious flesh, for your excessive love for your daughter is of the flesh, not of the spirit. Grieve not because her body died, but because she appeared before the Judgment seat of the Highest with repentance, a great sinner."

At this moment there was a knock at the door. "Mother, mother, it is I—let me in, quickly !"

"Ginevra !" exclaimed Mona Ursula, and she was about to rush to her daughter, but the friar stopped her.

"Where are you going ? Your daughter lies in the grave, dead, and will not rise until the great Day of Judgment. This is the evil spirit tempting you by the voice of your daughter, by the voice of your flesh and blood. Repent, pray—pray before it is too late, pray for yourself and for the sinful soul of Ginevra, that both of you may not be doomed to perdition."

"Mother, don't you hear me ? Don't you know my voice ? It is I—I am alive, not dead !"

"Let me go to her, father, let me——"

Then Fra Giacomo lifted his hand and whispered : "Go, and remember that now you doom not only yourself, but also Ginevra's soul, to perdition. God will curse you in this world and in the next !"

The face of the friar was so full of hatred, and his eyes burned with such a strange fire, that Mona Ursula stopped, terror-stricken, clasped her hands in prayer and fell at his feet.

Fra Giacomo turned toward the door, made the sign of the cross, and said: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! I adjure you by the blood of Him who was crucified, fade away, disappear, accursed one! This is holy ground. O Lord lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

"Mother, mother, have pity on me—I am dying!"

The mother started once more and stretched out her hands toward her daughter, but the friar, inexorable as Death, stood between them.

Then Ginevra fell to the ground, and feeling that she was freezing to death, she clasped her hands about her knees, bent down her head and resolved not to rise again, not to stir, until she died.

"The dead should not return to the living," she thought, and at that moment she recalled Antonio. "Is it possible that he also would drive me away?" She had thought of him before, but a sense of shame had restrained her, for she did not wish to go to him at night alone, having been married to another. But now she saw that she was dead to the living.

The moon had disappeared. The mountains, covered with snow, stood out pale against the morning sky. Ginevra got up from the threshold of her mother's house. Finding no shelter with her own, she went to a stranger.

Antonio had worked all night on a wax statue of Ginevra. He did not notice how the hours fled by, how the cold light of the blue winter morning was coming through the round window-panes. The sculptor was assisted by his favourite pupil, Bartolino, a seventeen-year-old youth, fair-haired and handsome as a girl.

Antonio's face was calm. It seemed to him that he was reviving the dead and giving her a new immortality. The lowered eyelids seemed ready to tremble and open, her breast seemed to rise and fall and warm blood seemed to flow in the fine veins on her temples.

He finished his work and was trying to give an innocent smile to Ginevra's lips, when there came a knock at the door.

"Bartolino," said Antonio, without leaving off his work, "open the door."

The pupil went over to the door and asked: "Who's there?"

"I—Ginevra Almery," replied a scarcely audible voice, which sounded like the rustling of the evening breeze.

Bartolino jumped back to the farthest corner of the room, pale and quivering. "The dead!" he whispered, crossing himself.

But Antonio recognised the voice of his beloved. He jumped up, rushed over to Bartolino and tore the key out of his hands.

"Antonio, bethink yourself—what are you doing?" muttered the pupil, whose teeth were chattering with fright.

Antonio ran over to the door, unlocked it and saw Ginevra lying at the threshold, almost lifeless, her loose locks covered with rime.

But he was not frightened, for his heart filled with great compassion. He bent over her with words of love, lifted her and carried her in his arms to his house.

He laid her down on pillows, covered her with his best rug, sent Bartolino for the old lady from whom he rented the workroom, built a fire in the fireplace, warmed up some wine and gave it to her to drink. She now breathed more easily, and although she was still unable to speak, she opened her eyes. Then Antonio's heart filled with joy.

"The woman will be here soon," he said, bustling about in the room. "We'll arrange everything right away—only you must pardon this disorder, Madonna Ginevra."

Confused and flushing, Antonio pulled the basket down from the ceiling, took out some money, handed it to Bartolino and told him to run to the market-place and buy meat, bread, and vegetables for breakfast, and when the old woman came he ordered her to prepare hot chicken soup.

The pupil rushed as fast as he could to make the purchases in the market-place, the old woman went out to kill a chicken. Antonio remained alone with Ginevra.

She called him over, and as he knelt beside her she told him everything that had happened.

"Oh, my dear," said Ginevra when she had finished her story, "only you were not frightened when I came to you, dead—only you love me."

"Shall I call your relatives—your uncle, your mother or your husband?" asked Antonio.

"I have no relatives; I have neither a husband nor an uncle nor a mother. They're all strangers, all except you: for to them I am dead, to you I am alive—and I am yours!"

The first rays of the sun began to pour into the room. Ginevra smiled at him, and as the sun was growing brighter, the colour of life came to her cheeks, warm blood flowed in the veins on her temples. When Antonio bent down to her, embraced her and kissed her on the lips, it seemed to her that the sun was reviving her, giving her a new and immortal life.

"Antonio," whispered Ginevra, "blessed be the death which has taught us to love; blessed be the love which is stronger than death."

ZINAÏDA HIPPIUS
(MME. MEREJKOVSKY)

B. 1867

APPLE BLOSSOM

I

"WHY did she arrange it so that I couldn't live without her? It was she who did it; I was not to blame."

I have written these words, and how strange I feel! I might have been speaking of the woman I love, but I love no woman; it was my mother who arranged it so that I am dying for want of her. If you keep a man in the warmth all his life and then turn him out unprotected into twenty degrees of frost, he is bound to die. And I am dying; I am dying because of her.

These last days have been great, significant days for me. I seem to have arrived at something, finished the half of my life, and ahead the path is straight and dreary and swift, and so monotonous that it will be impossible to know whether I am going backwards or forwards, upwards or downwards. I don't know even whether to resign myself as usual and go along the path at all.

I am twenty-seven, but no one would believe me; I look so old. And I know that I am an old man. There was a time when my face was beautiful and soft like Mother's. We used to look into the glass together, and it seemed to us that we were wonderfully alike. Now she would not know me. I am bent, my eyes are dull, my beard is long, my face yellow and dark. I think I shall soon die. I have no particular illness, but I am bound to die, for only those live who want to live, who have the will, and my will is gone. When I realised this during these last days and saw that nothing further awaited me, I even thought of suicide. But I can't . . . I am afraid.

I am a musician; not a great musician, but a passable one, as people say. I like quiet emotions and recollections that fill the heart with a sweet pain, and the soul with a profound stillness. Sometimes when playing a brilliant prelude at a concert (it is long since I have been on the platform now) I would look at some portly man in the front row of the stalls and think, "There you are,

looking at me and listening intently. You know what I am playing. Afterwards you will make some clever remark about my 'technique' and 'expression,' but if I were to stop this prelude and play some simple little Russian song that would bring back the years, long gone by, and the memory of a dark, warm garden, and two dear, forgotten eyes perhaps, you would get up and go out to hide your unwilling tears and the sweet sadness and joy that the prelude cannot give you. I know you will want to hide this joy, because you will be ashamed of it. It will seem to you that you alone feel it and the others do not understand, but all will feel it alike and each will be ashamed, thinking he is the only one to have it." All have some bright spot in the past. I have one like the rest.

II

It is dull to begin from the beginning, from the time when I was a child. However, at twenty my life was no different from what it was at ten. At twenty I was happier, perhaps, for I had outstripped Mother and could walk with her arm-in-arm. Our relations, though, did not change. When a boy I would often make a scene when Mother went away to the theatre without me. I used to say she had no right to be enjoying herself when I was forced to learn my lessons. She would solemnly beg my forgiveness and was unhappy if I sulked. It was impossible for us to quarrel. She had no one but me, and I had only her.

I never talked to my father. An old man, always occupied with some building or other, and living, as he did, in another part of the house, he had no interest for me. And Mother was young and slight as a girl, with large black eyes, fresh and sparkling; her garments rustled with her quick movements, and a strange perfume clung about her. I never knew what it was called, but it reminded me of early spring.

We used to live in a large town in the South. The house was a new one, built by my father, uncomfortable and cold. There was a small, tidy garden with other gardens adjoining it on all sides, so that it seemed to me endless. Our garden may be no more. I don't know, because I don't want to know.

I was never sent to school. Who could have stopped with Mother if I had gone? She had many friends, but none who paid her serious attention even though her relations to my father were known. I think she didn't encourage them. I had the best of masters and studied fairly well. Mother, of course, worked with me, but lessons often wearied her, and she would say, "Shall we chuck the books, Volodia, and go for a walk, eh?"

And we would go—Mother in her fine clothes, happy, and I, happy to possess so pretty a mother, and to be so much like her. She never changed or grew older, and we were soon taken for brother and sister, especially when I began to cultivate a moustache and a small beard. I did not seem to change inwardly. At twenty I began to take a serious interest in music and had visions of the Conservatoire. I had passed my exams. well and had to decide on what I was to do.

"You shall certainly go to the Conservatoire in Moscow," Mother said. "You must hurry up, because you are nearly twenty. You'll be famous some day; you'll see if you're not."

"When shall we go?"

"In the autumn, I think. Will that do?"

There was no question of my going without her. Whom should I have to talk to? Who would there be to caress me and walk with me?

I would sit in her room in the evenings on the floor, at her feet, by the fire, as I used to when a boy, and I would tell her how this and that girl was in love with me, and of how I flirted with them all, and which I liked the best. Then, it seemed to me that all the girls were in love with me, because I was so handsome, and could play the piano so well.

"Do you know, Volodia," Mother said to me once, "you are not a bit like a man; you are just like a woman. Perhaps that is the reason we are such great friends. . . . I wonder if it was my doing," she added, reflecting. "You are never in the society of men, for example, and when I see you among women, you don't flirt with them so much as show off your own charms. I am not sure . . . but it seems to me that if you were a stranger, I shouldn't like you."

I was horribly hurt, and sulked. What did this mean? Hadn't she said that I was like her? And now she didn't care for me. If it is bad to be like a woman, why was she not alarmed before?

For a long time Mother begged me to forgive her, and we made peace. I never forgot her words, though, and would often say to her afterwards, "Siromiatnikov, now, and Maremianov are manly, aren't they? Oughtn't all the women to be in love with them?" Mother would smile and press my mouth with her large though beautiful hand, her many bracelets jingling on the wrist.

I knew I became a coxcomb because the girls liked me; I knew that my life was empty and my heart grown commonplace with the constant posing and the senseless desire to attract. As for myself, I didn't fall in love once. There were many girls I liked, but none of them very much. I was very pure at the time, as few men are, but in thought I was no better than the others.

III

I took very little interest in books. Before my exams. I used to read; but since, I have only worked at my music. Music alone stirred me and made me think of that which was not. I could forget much for music.

At last we went to Moscow. I was glad to go. I felt instinctively that everything must be changed.

We took a pretty flat on the Malaya Nikitskaya, and lived pleasantly like two chums, going to the theatre and driving together. Friends soon appeared, relations were unearthed. But I began to work zealously, and rarely came out when Mother had visitors.

At the Conservatoire I made friends with no one except my master, who was still a young man. He used to think me strange but promising, as he said. He only solved me after I had taken him home and he had seen Mother. It was impossible to understand us apart, and when together, people said, we made a complete whole.

"Look here, young man," my master said to me once, "you must work. Something ought to come out of you, or you'll be utterly lost."

And I did work. I forgot my indolence, I never bothered about my hair or my clothes, I rarely went out; I did nothing but practise my scales. It wasn't that I liked them; I looked upon them as a steep ladder up which I had to climb. How I used to long for the blue sky and the earth and the flowers! I had never longed for anything, and I didn't think that I should ever long for anything at all. Mother comforted me, but . . . this is my one sore spot—I knew that we didn't understand each other about this. Mother didn't even care for our garden; she preferred to take her walks in the streets. She used to say that the sunlight was more soothing in the half-light of the drawing-room, and that her own perfumes were better than the perfumes of the spring.

When I reflected on it at moments, I was forced to feel that she was no longer young and that we could not really be chums; there was now a barrier between us. But these were only moments.

I have said that I never made any friends, and that was true of intimate friends, but I picked up acquaintances. I happened on drinking bouts on various occasions, and spent nights away from home. . . .

Mother questioned me with curiosity, but without the smallest reproach. I was annoyed, though, and related the details with disgust, but not without a sense of pride.

"It doesn't matter, Volodia," Mother said. "I knew this would

happen, but you mustn't forget about me. Do you understand? I must come first with you always, as you are with me. Do you understand? It would be impossible to live otherwise. Do you understand?"

I merely smiled and put my arms about her. How could she help being first? Who else could be first?

IV

Several years passed. I finished my course at the Conservatoire and appeared at concerts with success. But I was not happy. What could satisfy me in the noisy songs in which I moved my fingers quickly and all marvelled at and praised me? When should I be able to play a song which I often heard, but which invariably escaped me? On the day when I play it everything will suddenly change, and I will have the same emotions as the person listening to me. We will weep together, because the song will not pass us by, but will hold us and touch the profound and mysterious in us. . . . We will weep, and afterwards . . . nothing will matter afterwards, not even if we die; it will make no difference. I knew that as long as I had no emotion nothing would happen, and I believe beyond a doubt that if the thing that comes to all would come to me, I would be able to "speak." Instead of "to play" mentally I always used the expression "to speak to people."

Mother had to go home on two occasions and left me for several weeks. I collapsed each time; I gave up working and scarcely ate. A fearful horror took possession of me. It seemed that I was all alone in the world, that Mother was not and had never been. That she had never been was the worst! If she had never been she never could be. . . .

Why did she bind me to herself so that life without her could not go on? To say that I loved her would be meaningless. I don't love air and food, yet I can't exist without them. I know I am weak, terribly weak. I haven't strength enough to make an effort not to suffer when I am suffering. . . .

Last year when I was in Moscow my father fell ill, and Mother left me before Christmas. By the end of January I was ill myself; I threw up my work and went home. It meant an extra year, but what did that matter? I couldn't work without Mother. The evening of my arrival we spent together sitting on a couch in her room in silence. I knew she was pleased. She could no more live without me than I could without her. . . .

V

I spent the days at home playing a great deal. I had a small room with one window in it facing the garden. I put my piano by the window and looked out at the sky and the trees as I played.

In the middle of February the weather grew warm. I walked in the garden and gazed at the blue sky that peeped through the bare branches of the cherry and apple trees. How bright and golden it looked through the dark branches! The distant hills began to turn yellow—yellow, not green—with the new grass. The grass always shoots out of the earth so bright and young that it seems yellow. I love the early tiny blades. Like inquisitive children they awkwardly lift a clod of soil and peep out at the sun. Ah, Mother. . . . Why didn't she come out into the garden with me? And why didn't she love what I loved? Again a coldness flowed through my heart, again estrangement. . . .

The more the spring advanced the more I sat in the garden and the happier I was. I seemed to be growing with the yellow flowers. I abandoned my fugues; again something stirred in my soul, something brighter than any fugue; again I sought, but could not find. . . . It was there, near me, in the vernal sounds and perfumes. . . . How far away it is now! . . .

It was sitting at the end of a narrow, damp path, on a low seat, by the farthest hedge in my garden. The hedge was still dark. It never worried me that my garden ended by this hedge and did not stretch on eternally. There were trees wherever I looked, and grass and earth, and the sky above them. What mattered it that these trees belonged to other gardens, when they were as good as mine? Everything I beheld and that gave me pleasure was mine. Those rugged hills with the deep blue shadows on the distant horizon were mine, too.

The sun was sinking to the west and its rays grew colder. I knew it was time to go in, but I could not leave my seat. Suddenly I became aware of some one coming softly behind me, so softly that I scarcely heard. I looked round. A sound of footsteps came from the other side of the hedge in the next garden. It was not footsteps exactly, but a continued, rustling sound, like something being trailed along the ground. It ceased. I could have risen to see what it was, but I thought, "What does it matter? It is not worth the trouble of moving." The spring air tired me. I wanted to sit still and to doze.

But again the rustling sound was repeated and ceased. I raised my eyes and encountered two strange eyes looking at me intently and angrily. I knew they were angry by the agitation I was in.

Suddenly the expression of the eyes changed to indifference. On the other side of the hedge stood a girl I did not know. For some time we looked at each other, and were silent. I thought she would go away, but she spoke.

"Good evening," she said in an unfriendly tone. "I have seen you here a great deal. Why do you always sit here?"

"I like it," I replied shyly, as though apologising. "I have never seen you."

"I've seen you from the distance. I live over there." She pointed to a house concealed by the trees, some way from the hedge.

When she moved her arm, I noticed for the first time that her garments were strange, quite unlike the dress of an ordinary girl. She appeared to be dressed for a masquerade at a first glance, and then it struck me that her dress was simple; in fact, the only possible dress she could have worn. It was a loose garment of some soft, white material, as broad at the top as at the hem (I could see the whole of her then, for she was standing near the hedge), with a narrow dark-red girdle round her waist. I realised what had made the strange rustling sound when she walked. The dress had a long train—hardly a train, it was a large piece of material, falling in negligent, beautiful lines behind. The sleeves were long and came down almost to the fingers.

"Why do you wear such a strange dress?" I asked.

She was not astonished at my question.

"It's more becoming. Since no one sees me, I take care to look well for myself."

"I like it," I said. "What is your name?"

"Marta."

"Marta? Aren't you Russian?"

"Oh, yes, I'm Russian. My surname is Koreneva. I live here with my mother. Haven't you heard of her? Madame Koreneva, the blind millionairess?"

I recollected that I had heard something about Madame Koreneva the blind millionairess, and her young daughter, who studied hard and never went out.

"I have heard," I said slowly. "How strange that we should be neighbours and meet only for the first time."

"I don't like going out," she said hastily. "You seemed surprised that I was called Marta. My real name is Martha, but I like being called Marta best, because it's prettier."

"You are altogether beautiful," I said pensively, as though speaking to myself.

"Really?" she said simply. "I think so, but then some people say I'm not. They can't understand."

Our conversation did not astonish me. I couldn't realise that Marta was a girl and that I was paying her compliments. She seemed to me beautiful like the sky between the trees, like the mild, fragrant air, like the rosy cloud near the setting sun. She seemed to go so with everything, with the very twilight hour; I had no desire to talk or to wonder; I merely wanted to enjoy it all.

She, too, was silent.

"Good-bye," she said at last. "You may come here," she added haughtily, though with condescension. "You don't spoil the garden."

And once more I heard the continued rustle of her dress. She was gone. Her words did not astonish me. Her thoughts were the same as my own. One is astonished only at the things that are foreign to one, that are outside of one, and not at things that are within.

I was in a strange mood for the rest of the evening. I tried to play, but the sound of the piano irritated me. It seemed so harsh and pronounced. I went in to say good-night to Mother, but I did not tell her a word of what had passed. For the first time in my life her perfumes did not smell to me of the real spring.

VI

For two days I did not go into the garden.

I don't know what it was that I feared. Perhaps I felt that it would never be so charming again, and I did not wish to spoil the memory of it. Mother remarked on several occasions that I looked pale and did not play much. My father was still in bed, so that she was busy the greater part of the day.

"What is it, Volodia? Shall we go for a walk this evening?"

My reply was languid and apathetic. I had no desire to walk about the streets.

At last, on the third day, I decided, and, in the manner of weak people, I hastily took up my hat, and went into the garden with resolute strides.

There were many changes. The paths were drier, yellow anemones crept around the water-butt, and the buds on the apple trees were whiter and larger. Even on the hedge, here and there, tiny green leaves were visible. I had barely time to sit down and to collect myself, when I heard the familiar rustling sound, and Marta came up to the hedge.

"Good evening," she said.

I rose and drew near to her. She wore the same dress, or perhaps another one like it, but it had a golden girdle instead of a red one.

"Why haven't you been here?" she asked. "I told you you might come. However, I know why you didn't come."

"Why, then?"

"It doesn't matter . . . I know."

Was it the rays of the sun that fell on her in a peculiar way, or was it my imagination? It seemed to me that her dress was tinged with a faint pink, like the colour of apple blossom.

A strange face had Marta. I cannot recall it. I know only that there was nothing dark or vivid about it. The hair, twisted at the back into a simple knot, almost carelessly, seemed to mingle with the greyness of the air surrounding it; the oval face was pale and delicate; the eyes, too, were light-coloured and transparent like pure water. I can't remember their colour, but at mid-day, when the sky was very blue, they must have been dark.

I remember every feature, the delicate, straight brows, the bright-red, compressed lips, but the face as a whole escapes me. I can almost be glad that it does, for the more intangible a memory, the more complete it is.

"I know where the sun will set to-day," Marta said. "There, behind the bend of that hill. It set more to the left yesterday; a good deal more to the left. I know where the sun is going to set every day. These are my days, mine!" She spoke these words solemnly. "Would you like to know what changes there will be in the garden to-morrow? Would you like me to tell you what night the apple trees will burst into bloom?"

"How do you know?" I asked softly.

"I know all about the garden, the spring, the sun and the flowers, because I love them."

And I believed that she knew.

"What do you think that acacia tree over there is feeling?"

"Joy, I think."

"What joy?"

"The same joy that you and I . . . Joy from the sun."

"Yes, we all rejoice, all. . . . Sometimes I hear you play," she added after a pause. "I like the sound from here; it's not harsh. . . ."

I remembered that the piano had sounded very harsh to me during these days.

"You won't be angry with me?" Marta continued; "but you sometimes play such complex things, with so many different notes. That is not what you want; you ought to get away from other people's ideas, and listen here"; she waved her hand through the air; "and put yourself in harmony with this, in unison with everything. . . ."

She stopped, in obvious difficulties to explain her meaning, but, of course, I understood.

"I have always thought that. I shall do it. I am so glad you think as I do. It must be right."

"Can't you play something slower and simpler? I once heard a song, often sung and played at concerts, but not in the way I like it. It goes, 'Not a word, my friend, nor a sigh.' I have no voice, but I am going to sing it, because I want you to know the motif."

And she sang softly, as though she were speaking. I listened and asked her to repeat it.

"Even the words are beautiful," she said; "but I don't understand their meaning now. These are my days," she repeated once more. "When the spring has gone. . . ."

Her voice fell. It suddenly occurred to me that I had not seen her smile.

"Do you never smile, Marta?" I asked.

"The sun is about to set," she said solemnly. "I laugh in the morning."

At this moment, sitting in my St. Petersburg flat, with its dark, curtainless windows and sagging, grimy ceiling in the middle of which is a large, austere-looking hook, it seems to me that this never was, and could never have been. Had I dreamt it? But the thing that happened afterwards was not a dream—the loathsome, horrible, impossible thing for which I am dying. And the one depended so completely on the other.

That evening, after my second meeting with Marta, I put out the candles in my room, opened the window, and sat down to play. I tried to recall the motif of Marta's song. It was a sweet, simple motif, composed of a few simple notes. I did not add an unnecessary chord, nor a single scale. I repeated it again and again, and each time it came out different and better than the last, bringing back the vernal sounds and the yellow afterglow.

I didn't know what had come over me, but I felt it was something good. I went to the window and looked below; unconsciously, I opened the door, walked down the dark staircase, and went out into the garden.

It was lighter there than in the room. A hazy mist hung, shimmering; the new moon had set, and only the stars were out.

At the bottom of the path Marta's white dress gleamed dimly. I knew she would be there. It was right that she should listen. . . .

"It was good," she whispered when I was near her. "Don't speak loudly. I was waiting for you. I wanted to ask you something. Don't come to the garden to-morrow; come the day after to-morrow, at sunset, and stay a long time. That night the

apple buds will come into bloom. We shall see the first blossom . . . the first blossoms. . . . Would you like to ? will you come ? ”

“ I will come,” I said, also in a whisper.

She nodded, moved away from the hedge, and was gone.

I remained alone.

VII

The next day I got up late. I went lazily into the dining-room and lazily drank half my coffee. Recalling Marta's request, I did not go into the garden, but sauntered lazily about the rooms. I had no energy to do anything.

I had a desire to go in to Mother and sit down beside her in silence. Despite the haziness of my existence during these days, I was ill at ease and missed something—I had not seen much of Mother. I had no desire to tell her anything ; she did not care for the garden, and it was all connected with the garden. But Mother was as necessary to me as my very self. I had only then realised that she did not feel as I felt, nor the same things that I felt. Why had she deceived me for so long ? Why had she arranged it so that I couldn't live without her ?

I sat through dinner languid and pale, without eating anything. All at once I felt some one's gaze fixed on me, and I turned. Mother was glaring at me with darkening eyes, in which there was so much unexpected anger and hate that I shuddered, and my heart grew cold, before I had had time to think or to reflect. Was I dreaming ? was it my imagination ? A heavy weight seemed to oppress me. I shrank and grew smaller ; I was conscious of my own body, and my limbs seemed to be in the way.

I went straight from the dining-room to Mother's dressing-room, but she wasn't there. I waited. I knew she would come.

And she came. She didn't look at me ; she sat down in a big arm-chair in silence. I, too, was silent, suffering inexpressibly ; the pain was so unlooked for, so senseless, so hopeless.

“ I know everything, Volodia,” she said at last.

I was relieved at the sound of her voice, but I couldn't take in her words.

“ What ? ” I asked with an effort.

“ I know and understand everything. You are in love. Some people would say it was bound to come, but it mustn't. I won't have it, I won't have it ! I have tried my utmost, and you won't get away from me ! ”

I regarded her mad outburst in blank desperation. Her anger frightened me, but I did not pity her.

“ What are you driving at ? I don't understand.”

She grew calmer, and continued more quietly.

"You are in love with Martha Koreneva. I know you meet her in the garden. You go about half dazed. Do you want to marry her, by any chance? I must tell you then that the lady of your choice is an eccentric person. She's corrupt since childhood. She's either a fool, or much too clever. Take care. You needn't have kept it from me; I know just the same."

My thoughts were confused, my tongue would not obey me. I, in love with Marta? It couldn't be! I, want to marry her? I, to marry? Either one of us must be mad, or we are all mad. I began to stammer out confused words, scarcely knowing what I said. I spoke of the garden, the spring, and the apple trees—of Marta, saying that she was a living garden to me,—also of the sky and the wind. In despair I suddenly realised that Mother couldn't understand me unless she had felt what I had felt. . . .

An instinctive fear shot through my heart that I was alone, that Mother had deserted and hated me, and I couldn't be alone. I would have lied at that moment, if lying had been of any use. I had never lied before. Mother, I think, saw how I suffered.

"I see," she said, "that you never suspected anything; but you must bear in mind, Volodia, that our relations are not such that I could ever be a passively affectionate mother. I have given up the whole of my life to you, and you must give up the whole of your life to me—every bit of it. That is what I have aimed at. I have never left you; I made you myself, for myself. I may have done a wrong thing, but I don't care. There is justice in it. I am not capable of self-sacrifice; besides, it is too late now. However you might love your wife, or your mistress, or how much she might love you, you could not live without me!"

She spoke these words viciously and got up. I approached her, put my arms about her, and looked into her eyes.

"Don't torture me," I said. "I know I am yours; I can't live without you. I don't want any wives; I love no one. I don't understand why you . . . It was the garden and the flowers I cared about . . . and the music. . . . Forgive me."

She pressed me closely to herself and said, "You must promise me not to go into the garden, or to see Marta again. You are not in love with her yet, but . . . don't interrupt. . . . I feel it's impossible. . . . I know that you are weak enough to break your promise, my dear, but keep up your patience only for to-morrow. . . . Early on the day after, we shall go away. Eh?"

To-morrow! To-morrow the apple trees were coming into bloom!

"Silent? Don't you want to?"

Again she knit her brows.

I promised. It was painful, and I cried. I did so love the flowers. . . . But I knew I could give them up for her. I thought, though I did not understand why, that it was impossible to go. . . .

VIII

Preparations for the journey began in the morning. Our house-keeper could not come with us, for my father was still ill. Mother energetically did everything herself. I was as one dead, and sat about with half-shut eyes. The sun looked in at my window, bathing me in its warm rays, but it frightened me, so I got up and pulled down the blind. It was not my sun.

Hours passed. The gnawing at my heart was dull and incessant. I suffered, wondering, but submitted, having neither the strength to choose nor to decide.

At the hour of sunset I wanted to go to Mother, to press closely against her, and to sit with my eyes shut, losing all count of time.

I went into the drawing-room and looked out of the window. The sun was large and round, and seemed as big as the side of the grey hill. I almost ran into Mother's room. It was empty. I passed through the anteroom; no one was there. In the corridor I came across a housemaid. "Where is your mistress?" I asked.

"Madame has gone to order the carriage for to-morrow. She asked me to tell you, sir, that afterwards she was going to the Polotskys and would be back late. If you feel well enough, sir, she wants you to go to the Polotskys about nine; if not, she wants you to go to bed early. . . ."

I didn't wait for the maid to finish. This was cruel, beyond my strength to bear. Alone at that moment with my promise and an aching desire to go into the garden once more and to feel the spring, to hear what the apple trees would say. . . . I always submit without a struggle to things that are stronger than I, and then, too, I submitted to the inevitable. I looked at the sun again with a wan smile, and without so much as a glance back, or a moment of hesitation, I went into the garden.

IX

When I had banged the gate behind me and taken a few steps among the trees, I suddenly came to myself. I forgot everything. Each moment my relief was greater and my gladness grew. The mingled perfumes, various and many-toned, overwhelmed me. I had come back to my friends, ashamed that I had deserted them for so long. Unconsciously I walked to the end of the path.

Marta was there, not on the other side of the hedge, but on the

seat. She sat with hands clasped on knees and looked at me severely.

"I'm sorry, Marta," I said, "the sun has set."

"Not yet, it is not beyond the horizon yet; it is only behind the hill. It doesn't matter."

I sat down beside her. She was paler than usual, but her dress—I could no longer be mistaken—was not white, but had the faintest touch of pink about it.

"We must wait," Marta said. "They will open to-night. Do you notice how white the moon is? It looks like a small cloud. When it gets brighter and the sky rises higher, they will open."

"What makes you like this, Marta?" I asked. "You seem to be at one with them."

"You are the same, are you not? I know you are. That is why I am glad you are with me and that I love you."

"I love you, too, Marta," I said. "I love you as I do the garden, as everything."

"As everything?" she repeated, growing pensive.

The short twilight passed. The moon came out, casting a timid light on the path, shy and hazy. The scent of earth and anemones grew stronger. The strong branches of the apple trees threw their shadows, and everything that until then had been silent and motionless, murmured and moved. An almost imperceptible mist or vapour glided over the moonlight. The shadows crept along and left the flowers. The sky and the moon rose higher, higher, and colder.

A weird sensation of fear came over me. I waited intent, absorbed in my expectancy. Marta did not look at me. She felt cold.

She moved towards me, and unconsciously I put my arm about her, merely to be nearer to her.

"We must be very, very calm," she said, laying her white hand on mine. "We mustn't get excited. We must wait in perfect stillness. Without stillness in the heart, you can't get near *her*."

I knew she meant Nature.

"And we must be near to each other, eh, shall we?" she continued hastily, looking into my eyes. "You and I . . . at one with her. . . ."

I had never felt so "at one with her" as I did then. This was happiness, if it could only last.

A faint, new scent came towards us. We both became aware of it at the same time, and knew in a moment whence it came.

"The first bud has opened," Marta said. "Don't look at it. Wait until others come. . . ."

She spoke in a whisper, solemnly. I pressed her closer against me. I wanted to speak, but she murmured, "Not a word," looking

at me beseechingly. I was silent, and glad to be silent. I did not want more than I had ; this was happiness in itself.

A strong, new perfume filled the whole garden. The moon declined ; the apple trees did not grow dark ; they were white, but not with the moonlight.

At the moment when all around us grew clearer and colder, and the sky turned green and the dawn broke, I looked into Marta's face. She was sitting in the same attitude, closely pressed against me. She raised her eyes and smiled.

"It is time now," she said. "The sun is going to rise, and the apple trees will bloom."

A pang shot through my heart. I remembered. I turned pale ; my heart grew heavy and cold.

Marta looked at me anxiously.

"What is it ?"

"Marta, I am unhappy. . . . Pity me. . . . I must go away. . . ."

"Go away ?" she repeated slowly, without surprise. "So soon ? Stay a little longer. There is no hurry. Stay till they begin to fall."

"I can't, I can't. . . . It is not I. . . . They want me. . . ."

"Oh, others," she said calmly. "They always spoil everything. Don't be unhappy. Go. I didn't want it to be so soon. . . ."

I looked into her eyes in despair. They were wide open and calm, but full of tears. Had she moved her lashes or her glance, the tears would have fallen.

I got up. She remained on the seat, but did not look at me.

"Good-bye," I said.

"Good-bye, don't forget. . . ."

"What ?"

"Everything. I shall not forget. We both know now how to live. . . ."

"Marta ! Others. . . ."

"Yes, others ! Aren't you able . . . can't you. . . . But you won't forget, will you ?"

I looked at her, then at the green sky, now quite bright ; I looked at the apple trees that seemed covered with snow.

"I won't forget," I said. "Good-bye."

She nodded. I went away.

X

What happened afterwards I will tell briefly, because it is too painful for me to linger over it. To revenge herself, Mother did it on purpose, I know. She grew worn and haggard that night, it is true, but it must have been from the violent hatred she felt towards me. Everything helped. I knew that she wouldn't forgive me,

that she couldn't forgive me. I never said a word to her. I seemed to be dead. She ordered me to go away alone, and said that she would never forgive me, or see me again. She must have known that she wouldn't be able to bear this, and that she would forgive me when she saw that I couldn't live without her, so she died on purpose, not to break her word.

Some man approached me and gave me a long handshake. He asked me to bear up and said, "Your mother was a wonderful woman. What a shock her death must have been to you! Your relations to each other were so wonderful. . . ."

I laughed in an unnatural way and said, "Yes, you are right." And this time it was I who shook the man's hand.

After the funeral I went away. What could have kept me there? I did not ask about Marta and did not go into the garden. . . .

How many years have passed since then! I have lost count of them. Sometimes I recall the night when the apple trees burst into bloom, and I sit down by the piano and play the little song, "Not a word, my friend, nor a sigh," and my heart grows lighter. But that happens very rarely. I seldom remember. . . . With every hour my life becomes more burdensome. I live because I haven't the strength even to die. I live in St. Petersburg, alone in this gloomy flat, give useless music lessons, and return aimlessly to my home. How much longer will it go on?

There is a hook in the middle of the ceiling in the large room. I have already mentioned it. . . . Why shouldn't I take a cord from the trunk in the hall and throw it over the hook? No one would know, particularly as it is night. . . . My old cook is asleep. What harm could there be in my throwing the cord over the hook? I could take it down and put it back in the hall again if I chose. There would be no harm even if I were to make a noose. I wouldn't hang myself. I'm not bound to hang myself simply because I make a noose! Hanging is so horrible, so ugly. . . . How far away I am from Marta! Am I really going to? . . . No, no; it's only to try. No one need know. I will only try. . . .

SKITALITZ
(A. PETROV)

B. 1868

THE LOVE OF A SCENE-PAINTER

THE scene-painter Kostovsky had gone on the spree just at a time when he should not have done so : preparations were afoot for the presentation of a spectacular play, the success of which wholly depended upon the beauty of the set scenes. The posters were already displayed all over the city ; it was necessary to hurry forward the different arrangements and to paint the new scenery, and now something happened that the stage-manager had feared all along ; Kostovsky went on the spree.

This always occurred just at a time when he was indispensable. As if an evil spirit prompted him just at such times, and the forbidden liquor became more tempting than ever, he felt an unconquerable longing to experience a feeling of guilt, to act against the will of every one, against his own interests, but certainly not against the promptings of the Evil One, who had, for the time being, wholly taken possession of him.

His impetuous nature, full of talent, could not exist, it seemed, without powerful impressions ; and he found them only in carousing. The days of revelry were for him always full of interesting encounters and strange adventures peculiar only to himself. But as soon as he came to his senses and sobered up, he took to his work with a sort of furious energy : everything around him at such times was at a fever-heat of excitement, and he himself was burning with the fire of inspiration. Only because he was a wonderful scene-painter, a genius of his craft, he was not discharged. He hurt the respectability of the company with his scandals, adventures, and carelessness for dress, his whole plebeian appearance ; but for all that his brush came the most exquisite, artistically executed, which the public often called the painter before whom they stood, about which the press remarked afterwards.

Behind the scenes the members of the com-

Kostovsky, and no one wanted to be on intimate terms with him ; the chorus-singers "drank," too, but considered themselves of a higher class than the workman-painter, and did not want him in their society ; and the chorus-girls and ballet-dancers treated him like some sexless being, kept aloof from him, and looked at him with a grimace of disgust. He, on his part, also took little interest in them.

He admired only Julia, a little ballet-dancer, and even her he loved only as an artist, when she danced on the stage enveloped in the rays of the limelight which he himself manipulated. He liked the turn of her pretty little head, and he admired her, distinguishing her in the crowd of the other ballet-dancers by an exceptionally bright ray. In real life he never spoke to her, and she pretended that she did not notice his attentions at all.

Living in a strange solitude, without love or friends, not having the sympathy of any one in the company, but being at the same time indispensable to it, he felt deeply injured, and caroused, as happened now when he was so badly needed.

The stout stage-manager stood on the stage after rehearsal and spoke about Kostovsky with the business-manager of the troupe, an elegant, dark-complexioned man of Hebrew type.

The broad, fat face of the stage-manager expressed wrath, anxiety, and sorrow.

"Well, just tell me, please," he spoke tearfully, while in his heart a storm was raging, "what am I to do now? What am I to do n-o-w?"

And, crossing his fat hands helplessly on his paunch, he wrathfully and sorrowfully looked at his companion.

"Hoggishness, that is all!" replied the business-manager. "He started to drink on the steamer when we were coming here and has not sobered up yet. And do you know, he fell into the sea on the way here! That was a joke! I was suddenly awakened by the cry: 'Man overboard!' I sprang to my feet. 'Who is it?' 'Kostovsky!' 'Ah, Kostovsky, and I thought it was—some one else!' And I went back to bed as if nothing had happened, because, in my opinion, Kostovsky is not a man, but a pig."

ceased laughing, and a little softened by the story of Kostovsky's mishap at sea.

"Here. He is sobering up a little in a dressing-room. They searched for him all over town, and at last they found our friend in a tavern, engaged in a hot battle with some apprentice ; they did not even allow him to finish the fistic argument, but pulled them apart, and brought him here. Now he is nursing a beautiful black eye."

"Bring him in here, the rascal."

The young man ran briskly across the stage and vanished behind the scenes. And immediately the empty theatre loudly resounded with his piping voice :

"Kostovsky ! Kostovsky !"

"He will come at once," the man said on returning, and winked his eye as if to say : "The fun will begin immediately."

A slow, unsteady step was heard approaching, and upon the stage appeared the man who had caused so much bad blood and ill-feeling, and whom even the sea would not accept.

He was of middle height, sinuous, muscular, and slightly round-shouldered, dressed in a coarse blue blouse full of paint spots and girded by a leather strap ; his trousers, bespattered with paint, were tucked into his high boots. Kostovsky had the appearance of a common workman, with long, muscular hands like those of a gorilla, and probably of great strength ; his far from good-looking but very characteristic face, with its prominent cheek-bones and long, reddish moustaches, breathed of power. From under knitted brows gloomily, and at the same time good-naturedly, looked out a pair of large blue eyes. The main peculiarity of this face was an expression of impetuosity and energy ; his left eye was embellished by a large discoloration—the mark of a well-aimed blow—and his coarse, reddish locks bristled out rebelliously in all directions. On the whole, Kostovsky impressed one as a bold, untamable being.

He bowed, at once shamefacedly and proudly, and did not offer any one his hand.

"What are you up to now, Kostovsky ? Eh ? " the stage-manager spoke in a freezingly cold manner. "The play is announced for to-morrow and we shall have to withdraw it ! What are you doing me all this injury for ? Is it honest of you ? Why are you drinking ? Just look what an ornament you have under the eye ! You ought to be ashamed of yourself !"

Kostovsky took a step backward, thrust his long fingers thro' his locks, and suddenly became alight with a passionate, indomitable emotion :

"Mark Lukich ! " he exclaimed in a dull, husky, but ~~sy~~ ^{she} had one voice : "I drank ! That is true ! But now—— I will go ~~going~~ ^{or} do the thing necessary ! To-day is Saturday and there is no ~~and in~~ ⁱⁿ profitable

I shall not go out of here till to-morrow! I shall work the whole night through! I! I—— Great God!”

Kostovsky waved his hands in the air, and it seemed that he was suddenly possessed with a desperate energy. He longed for work as for expiation.

“But do you understand what there is to be done? Entirely new scenery must be painted, and well painted, too! Do you understand?”

“I shall paint it well, no fear of that!” exclaimed Kostovsky enthusiastically, once more running all his ten fingers through his coarse locks. After musingly pacing the stage for some moments, he stopped before the stage manager.

“Please tell me all about it, what sort of scenery is wanted, and for what it is needed,” he said in a calmer voice.

“You see, this will be the second act. Two people are lost in the steppe at night. The place must be a dull, obscure wilderness; a terrible fear possesses them, and supernatural things take place there. You must paint for us this steppe; everything must be in it: the impression of remoteness, the darkness and clouds, and so vividly that a shiver of dread should run through the public.”

“That is enough!” interrupted Kostovsky. “I shall paint you the steppe. I will work the whole night on the stage by lamplight and to-morrow everything will be ready. Have you the materials?”

“Everything is ready; all that is necessary is to work!” put in the business-manager.

But Kostovsky already felt the inspiration of the artist. He turned away from his superiors, no longer even aware of their presence, and standing in the centre of the stage he shouted in a powerful, imperious voice:

“Here, Pavel, hurry there! Vanka, here with you! Lively there, you sons of the devil, Kostovsky means to work now!”

The workman Pavel and the apprentice Vanka, a nimble, slouchy fellow, passionately devoted to the stage, came rushing in and immediately began to bustle about, spreading the enormous canvas and bringing forward the paints and brushes.

He made rapid strides in his work. With a blue mark under his eye, dirty with paint, with bristling hair and moustaches, he accomplished with his enormous brush a titanic kind of work. His eyes were ablaze and his face looked inspired. He created.

At eleven o'clock in the morning the whole company, which had gathered for the rehearsal, stood agape before the creation of Kostovsky. The actors, chorus-singers, male and female, and the ballet-dancers gazed at the enormous canvas from the stage and afterward from the orchestra, and freely expressed their opinions. The whole background of the stage was occupied by the gigantic picture. It was the steppe. On the edge it was overgrown with tall, dense burdocks and other steppe-grass, farther could be seen a desolate-looking steppe-grave, thickly overgrown with grass, and still farther unrolled the cheerless, dull steppe with a wonderful, immeasurable perspective, a steppe out of the fairy-tales, out of the times of knighthood—pathless and unpeopled. It seemed to the onlookers that suddenly the famous Knight of the Russian fairy-tale, Ilia Muromets, would appear from behind the mound and would bawl out: "Is there a live man in this field?" But the bleak steppe was silent, terribly, gloomily silent; looming up against the sky were dark grave-mounds, and sinister, black, bushy clouds were gathering. There was no end to these clouds and grave-mounds, and the measureless vista of this steppe. The whole picture breathed gloom and oppressed the soul. It seemed as if something terrible would immediately take place, that the grave-mounds and the clouds had a symbolic meaning, that they were in a way animated. True, when one stepped up too close to Kostovsky's scenery one could not make out anything: one saw a mere daub and splash made with the large brush—hasty, bold strokes, and nothing more. But the farther the spectator retreated from the canvas the clearer appeared the picture of the enormous steppe, spiritualised by a powerful mood, and the more attentively he looked at it, all the more was he possessed by the feeling of uncanny dread.

"Well, what do you say to this?" hummed the crowd. "Devilish fellow, Kostovsky! A real talent! Just see what devilry he has let loose!"

"Well, that is nothing!" he replied naively. "We are simple workmen: when we work we work, but when once we are bent on having a good time we take our fill—that is how we are made!"

They all laughed at him, but they spoke about him the whole day: he had never succeeded so well as at this time.

And he continued at his work; it seemed as if his energy had ~~only~~ just now become aroused. While the rehearsal was going ~~on~~ she painted a Hindu Temple, shouted at his assistants, and in ~~the~~ fitable

of inspiration even railed at the stage-manager, who wanted to draw his attention to something.

He was untamable, irresponsible, and great. Dirtier and more unkempt than ever, he strutted through his workroom at the back of the stage, painted the superbly beautiful, fantastic Temple, and lived through the happiness of inspiration. His whole appearance, excited by the sleepless night full of inspiration, was the embodiment of power and passionate energy: the pale face with the blue discoloration under the eye, the bristling locks, and the flaming eyes that seemed to emanate blue rays—all this showed that the inspiration of Kostovsky did not flash up for a moment, but that it burned long and steadily with an inexhaustible, even light.

He was wholly engrossed by his Temple, when he suddenly felt close to him some one's light step, and an exquisite perfume was wafted to where he stood. He turned around—before him stood Julia.

She wore the costume of a ballet-dancer, that is, almost no costume, as she had to dance at the rehearsal. She was a pretty little thing in pink tights, white satin slippers, and short gauze skirts; her high, strong bosom heaved tranquilly and peacefully, and her creamy face smiled. Her black, almond-shaped, languid eyes looked tenderly and promisingly at Kostovsky. In the costume of a ballet-dancer she looked like a being just out of fairyland, and it was difficult to imagine a being so totally different from Kostovsky as was this fairy. She was all exquisite grace and liteness; he, ungainly, dark, and big, stood before her abashed and confused, and gazed at her with delight and admiration; the long brush was lowered to the floor to her feet.

Kostovsky forgot his work, and Julia broke into a ringing laugh, and, sparkling with her sharp little teeth, she came nearer to him with her light, graceful step, and, stretching out to him her beautiful little hand, she boldly said: "How do you do, Kostovsky!"

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Several months passed. The enormous opera-house was crowded to the doors. Behind the scenes they were hot at work, crowding one another, bustling and pushing. Through the curtain came the hum of the public and the solemn waves of the orchestra music.

The stage-carpenters ran about like men possessed, adjusting and shifting the scenery, and from somewhere in the darkness above rose and descended enormous canvases, the walls of temples, steeples, gods, and sea-waves.

eyes were alight with joy and happiness, his feet were encased in shiny patent-leather boots, and he wore a well-fitting, elegant velvet jacket ; his fair locks were no longer bristling.

"Let down the bottom of the sea !" he commanded in a ringing voice.

The enormous canvas on which was depicted the bottom of the sea was lowered. The painter retreated a few steps and once more looked lovingly at the "sea bottom." This was his latest creation.

"Listen, Pavel !" he shouted, "when the mermaids begin to swim, you will let Julia come first and lower than all the rest ; let her down to the very bottom !"

"It shall be done !"

At last everything was ready for the mermaids to swim over the bottom of the sea. Kostovsky was already perched high, with the electric reflector turned on the stage ; he himself had to manage the lighting up of the scenery and the actors. The Bottom of the Sea became suffused with a tender, poetic light. This greenish-silvery light seemed to penetrate the water as if with the bright sunlit day above. And here at the bottom everything lived knowing no light. In the distance stood a coral-reef, and everywhere half-alive vegetation greedily stretched its branches over the water, and all around floated slimy jelly-fish.

Underneath, the first thing to meet the eye was the yawning mouth of a submarine cave, from which were thrust out the arms of a hideous, enormous devil-fish that, without moving, glared out of its two green eyes.

And from amid this primitive, abnormal world appeared a wonderfully beautiful woman with flowing hair and bare shoulders, with the form of a fish below the waist, covered with shining, silvery scales. The loveliness of her head and the beauty of her shoulders were enhanced by the ugliness of the submarine world.

She swam like a fish, easily and gracefully, turning and twisting, her scales sparkling and glittering ; she was followed by another mermaid, a whole school.

Lighted by the rays of the reflector, at the will of Kostovsky, they became marvellous, fairy-like beauties.

But they were all eclipsed by one. She swam lower than all, and was distinguished from all by the radiance of her beauty. She was lighted better and more alluringly than the rest, the tenderest rays of the reflector warmly and lovingly fell upon her, ran after her, and lovingly caressed her graceful body, adding a seductive expression to her face and making her eyes shine like stars. She seemed to be created of light, and this light changed with every moment, and she changed with it, garbed in thousands of different tints. A veritable

queen of the deep. She felt that the artist-enchancer had bestowed on her a marvellous loveliness, that the delighted public was ready to break forth into a storm of applause in honour of this beauty, and, swimming close to the painter, she gratefully waved her sparkling fish-tail, over which, by the will of the enamoured magician, suddenly fell a shower of many-coloured diamonds.

She swam behind the scenes, and he, rising on tip-toe and smiling happily, sent her an airy kiss from behind the reflector.

All in the company knew of this love affair behind the scenes : Julia always left the theatre in the company of Kostovsky, they stayed at the same hotel, and his room adjoined hers. Kostovsky was always with her, enjoying to the full the pleasure that the contemplation of her beauty afforded him, while she willingly allowed him to pay court to her. He followed her like a faithful dog, and waited long and patiently at the door of the women's dressing-room while she leisurely removed the make-up from her face, dressed, and chatted with the other girls.

This time, after the conclusion of the performance, he had to wait particularly long at the foot of the stairs ; one after another the closely wrapped little figures came down the stairs and went off with the men who were awaiting them, just as the scene-painter was awaiting Julia. But *she* was not to be seen.

Sad and troubled, Kostovsky stood at his place, looking about him indifferently, and continually throwing expectant glances at the door of the dressing-room. And the door opened less and less often, as almost all the women had already departed.

At last Rosa, a vivacious Jewish chorus girl, came out. "What are you standing here for ?" she drawled, lifting her brows in surprise and making a sly grimace. "I am the very last one, there is no one else, and Julia left long ago. It seems you did not notice when she went out."

"What, is she gone ?" asked Kostovsky, and on his face appeared a pained expression.

"Ha, ha, ha !" Rosa's silvery laugh rang out ; "very simply, she left before the end of the performance in the company of her new admirer, and you, my sweet one, have tired her long ago !"

The scene-painter stepped back and caught himself by the head. "It is not true !" he said in a dull voice.

"Well, I like that !" Rosa said excitedly, "and it is your own doing, too ! She only wished to be pushed ahead. You always light her up so that the whole front row is second to her ! She has made a career for herself, and does not need *you* any longer." And Rosa ran laughing down the stairs.

Kostovsky stood long motionless in the same place, and, enveloped in the quiet and darkness of the empty theatre, he felt that, little by

little, then stronger and stronger, his breast was filled with acutest pain.

When Kostovsky knocked at the door of Julia's room she received him very coldly. Her moist eyes looked indifferently and tranquilly from under her thick, black eyelashes; her black hair, carelessly pinned, lay like a luxurious crown, and two thick curls fell over her full cheeks. She wore a wide kimono of some cheap material, and light slippers.

"Julia," whispered Kostovsky, breathless with excitement.

"Sit down!" she said carelessly, not noticing anything special in his appearance, and added, "and try to occupy yourself with something. I really haven't any time to entertain you."

"Julia!"

She half-leaned upon the bed and became wholly absorbed in her book.

He was irritated by this woman's unnecessary artfulness; why use these artifices, which offended him the more, because she could easily tell him outright and settle it?

"Julia, you speak to me as to a visitor who has to be entertained? Why this ceremony?"

"There is no ceremony about it!" she replied in a displeased tone.

"It—simplifies our relations, that is all: every one occupies himself—with what he pleases. I am—reading. And you occupy yourself with something else, and if you feel ennui—go away."

She was driving him out.

Kostovsky was beside himself with rage at this "simplifying of relations."

"Listen to me," he said, in a voice full of irritation. "I wish to speak to you, and will not wait till you finish reading."

She did not reply, and, half reclining on the bed, she continued looking at the open book. A painful silence ensued.

Kostovsky sat at the table and quietly gazed at Julia. Leaning on her elbows on the pillow, she had thrown herself into a graceful, kittenish pose; her little feet encased in their tiny, light slippers, impishly hid under the folds of her kimono, and from their hiding-place teased Kostovsky. The lovely curves of her body showed through the thin dress, the wide sleeves left visible her chubby arms to the elbow; and she was, as a whole, so sweet and graceful that Kostovsky, hating her at this moment, longed to take her in his arms.

He turned his eyes away from her. The room was poorly furnished—a cheap hotel room, lighted by electricity. Near the door stood the wardrobe with her costumes, in the centre the table, and near the window the dresser and a mirror. On a rack close to the entrance into the room hung her plush jacket, trimmed with tiny cats' paws. He looked long and with hatred at this jacket

with its cats' paws, and recalled how amiably she used to meet him before, forcing him into a chair and smoothing his bristly locks tenderly, and how pleasant it was to feel the tender touch of the little hand.

* She quickly flung away her book, and angrily rose from the bed. "You have nothing to speak to me about!" she exclaimed, reddening. "Everything has been said already! It is time to end this spoony love affair, this sentimental drivel!"

"Spooniness—sentimental drivel," he repeated bitterly. "Julia! What has come between us?"

"There is nothing between us, nothing could be!" she energetically declared. "We have nothing in common—nothing whatsoever—and—we must put an end to our acquaintance!"

She gave the table a push and sat down in the darkest corner of the room, looking at him from there with her large, black eyes. Her eyes had always the same expression; no matter at whom they looked, they seemed to be inviting and promising something without the knowledge of their possessor. Spurning him, she at the same time lured him on.

"I understand!" he spoke sadly, and pushed his chair close to her. "You wish to part with me; they say you have another—some one from the first row of the orchestra. Well, let us part. But why all this subterfuge and why quarrel? I do not wish that all this should end so badly—with a quarrel. I wish at least to keep the memory. But, Julia, know that all those—from the first row—despise you—humiliate you—love in you only the flesh. And I—— Why, I—l-o-v-e you, the devil take you, accursed one!"

He grasped her arm above the elbow and shook her with his large paws.

"Ah! How rude! He abuses me! Let me go! Let me go, I say; you will dislocate my arm! Ruffian!"

She longed to quarrel with him. And he, on his part, felt a flood of ferocious wrath, a passionate longing to tear, lacerate, beat, and throw her out.

He grasped her arms still tighter. His eyes turned a greenish colour, his teeth gave out a grating sound.

"Ai!" she cried. But he fell on his knees before her.

"Sweetest, dearest, my golden one, my sun, my joy! You are my all; all my thoughts, all my feelings, everything is for you, from you, and about you! Oh, I am rude; I am a brute, but I love you! Without you there is no life for me; I shall again sink to the bottom from which you raised me! Well, darling, well, my happiness, forgive me. You see I kiss your hands, your dress. Forgive!"

And on his bent knees this big, powerful man caught the tiny hands of the tiny woman and kissed them, kissed her dress, and wept.

When he lifted his head he suddenly caught her glance directed toward him, a strange, attentive glance. In this glance of her moist, black eyes there was no love, nor pity for him ; nor even contempt, but something offensive, resembling curiosity, but more heartless than curiosity. It was the curiosity of a vivisectionist, the curiosity he exhibits when dissecting a live rabbit, or that of a naturalist when he sticks his pin through a rare beetle, and looks on at its contortions. He even now interested her, but only as something primitive, original : his sharp transitions from rudeness to tenderness, the strangeness of the declaration, the sudden fits of ferocious rage only to humble himself before her and to weep a moment later—all this was very interesting.

But Kostovsky's mind was suddenly illumined as if by lightning : he understood all at once the real relation of Julia toward him, and felt that he had received a deadly wound at her hands, that she was only interested in him, but she had never loved him, could not love him ; that she was a being from a world other than his ; that he was a total stranger to her. The words died away in his heart. He grew silent, caught his hat, and without another glance at Julia rushed out of the room and the hotel.

Kostovsky found himself suddenly in a dirty dram-shop, where his steps had almost unconsciously led him. He had not drank for a long time, but now he felt a terrible necessity for the dram-shop, the noise, the clinking of the glasses, and the smell of bad vodka.

He sat in a corner of the dram-shop, alone, at a small table. Before him stood a large bottle of vodka and the noxious side-dishes peculiar to such resorts. The dirty table-cloth was stained with vodka and beer, and the paraffin hanging-lamp dimly lighted the room, filled with tipsy people. They were all bawling, drinking, and clinking their glasses ; the pale-faced waiters ran about, serving the drinks, and in the adjoining room cracked the billiard-balls, and some one of the players, whenever he hit the ball, sang out in a merry tenor voice a popular song : " Wherever I go, or stroll, I see only Ju-li-a, only Ju-li-a."

" Oh, the devil ! " muttered Kostovsky, pouring out the tenth glass, and gloomily draining it. He was irritated because, even here in the dram-shop, *she* was persecuting him. He had decided to forget her for evermore : he hated and despised her, and did not wish to remember her at all.

The dram-shop enveloped him in its sounds and smells, and eased his suffering with its well-known colouring of something intimate, free, something he had lived through in the past.

But little by little his thoughts withdrew from the dram-shop, and *she* appeared once more, and would no longer leave him.

She was now in the costume of a mermaid, with the body of a fish covered with silver scales, radiant under the many-coloured rays of the reflector, seductively beautiful. She lured him after her with enticing smile, and swam away far, far into the boundless sea. And the man in love with a mermaid felt that he was perishing, that he could never more return to his former carelessness, power, and strength of soul. And he recollected his former life before he knew the mermaid and her kisses. True, he had caroused then, but that was not drunkenness, it was dare-devilry, his power was seeking a free outlet. His heart was athirst for dash and merriment. So, like the legendary fisherman, he had found in his net a mermaid. He lifted her in his arms, kissed and caressed her, and—good-bye to careless life! The man was ruined by the mermaid!

"Oh, the devil!" Kostovsky roared, draining his glass, and thinking thereby to drive off the troublesome thoughts; but *she* continued to torture him pitilessly, appearing before him every moment in another costume, now as a fairy, a shepherdess, and again as a mermaid; or she swam close to him in a wide homely gown, and her thick, black curls fell over her forehead and upon her full, pink cheeks. And her whole figure was as if flooded by radiant, poetic rays.

"And when with friends I drain the wine-red bowl, I see before me none but Julia"—came from the billiard-room the merry tenor voice. Gradually the dram-shop filled with a mist, through which the lights burned very low, and the noise of the revellers sounded indistinctly and seemed far off, resembling far-away sea-breakers. The dram-shop filled with sea-waves, which rose and fell. And from the waves swam out a mermaid who was laughingly luring Kostovsky.

For a moment he lifted his head, and again saw before him the bottle, poured out another glass, and drained it; the mist became denser, rolled before his eyes. But he still saw, rising amidst the wine-vapours high over the bottle, her poetic, sweet image.

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When Kostovsky was at last found, after a search of several days in the different dram-shops of the city, and brought to his senses, the opera, with its sea-bottom and mermaids, was again produced.

Now Kostovsky once more looked his old self: the unkempt, carelessly dressed scene-painter was even more gloomy than before; his locks bristled and his moustaches stood on end worse than ever.

He stood gloomily on his platform behind the scenes, lighting up the mermaids with the rays from his reflector. His soul was filled with cold and gloom and obduracy. Now he himself kept aloof from everybody, hated the whole troupe, and lived alone.

And the mermaids swam over the sea-bottom.

But it was no longer the former radiant, poetic light which shone upon them ; the light which the artist threw upon them now was a sad, pale light, and under its rays they seemed inanimate, sickly, and half dead.

But when Julia appeared, swimming as formerly lower than the rest, sinister, dark-blue rays came pouring upon her, and she looked more like a fury than a mermaid. Her face was blue, horrible, with black lips and black cavities instead of eyes, and the slippery fish-body was as if covered with a loathsome slime.

A mutter of disgust ran through the theatre.

And the painter also lit up with the same light the sea-bottom with all its monsters ; and like a symbol of nightmare and sadness the green-eyed devil-fish came out of the darkness, and the noxious octopuses began to move around.

The blue body of Julia seemed to swim in this loathsome mass, and at last blended with it into one living, monstrous, deformed creature.

The scene-painter slowly turned the glasses of the reflector, gazed upon the work of the light he had created, and it seemed to him that he had destroyed for ever the former charm of the woman, and that she whom he had loved had never been beautiful ; and it seemed to him that only now he saw her in her real light, and that she only became divinely beautiful when lighted by the bright rays of his love.

MAXIM GORKY

B. 1868

TWENTY-SIX MEN AND A GIRL

THERE were twenty-six of us—twenty-six living machines shut up in a damp cellar, where from morning till night we kneaded dough and made it into krendels and sushkas. The window of our cellar looked on to a brick area, green and mouldy with the moisture. The window was protected from the outside by a close net of iron bars, and the light of the sun could not penetrate through the panes covered with flour dust. Our employer had bars placed in front of the window so that we should not be able to give a piece of his bread to a passing beggar, or to one of our comrades who might be out of work and starving. Our employer called us rogues and gave us half-rotten tripe to eat for dinner instead of meat. It was close and stuffy for us cooped up in that stone box, beneath the low, heavy ceiling covered with steam and cobwebs, and within the thick walls, grimy with dirt and mildew. We would rise at five o'clock in the morning, only half awake, and at six, dull and listless, we were already seated at the table making krendels out of the dough that had been prepared for us by our comrades while we were asleep. And the whole day, from early morning till ten o'clock at night, some of us would sit at the table rolling the yielding dough with our hands, while the others were kneading the flour with the water. And the whole day long the simmering water in the pot where the krendels were cooking sang low and sadly, and the baker's shovel scraped harshly and viciously against the oven as the pieces of boiled dough were thrown on to the hot bricks. And from morning till night the wood burned in the stove, and the red reflection of the flames danced over the walls of the bakehouse, as though silently mocking us. The giant stove looked like the misshapen head of some fairy-tale monster—it seemed to thrust itself out of the ground, open its broad jaws, full of living fire, and breathe heat upon us, and look at our endless work with its two dark ventilators over the oven. These two ventilators were like eyes—the dispassionate,

pitiless eyes of a monster. They always looked at us with the same dark gaze, as though they were weary of seeing the eternal slaves, and without expecting anything human of us, scorned us with the cold scorn of wisdom.

Day after day, in the flour dust, in the dirt we brought in with our feet from without, in the hot heavily laden atmosphere, we rolled the dough into krendels, moistening it with our sweat. We hated our work with a poignant hatred and never ate what we made with our hands, preferring krendels made from rye dough. Sitting at the long table facing each other—nine facing nine,—mechanically, through the long hours, we would move our hands and fingers, and were so used to the work that we had no need to follow our movements. And we had looked at one another for so long that each of us knew every wrinkle on the face of his comrade. We had nothing to talk about, we had exhausted every topic of conversation, and were silent most of the time, unless we abused each other—one can always abuse a man, especially if that man be a comrade. But even that happened rarely. How can a man offend you if he be half dead, if he is like a stone, if all his feelings have been crushed out of him by the weight of his labours? But silence is very painful to men like us who have said all there is to say—it is only for those who have not yet begun to speak that silence is simple and easy. . . . But sometimes we would sing, and our song would begin in this way: in the midst of our work one of us would heave a deep sigh, like the sigh of a tired horse, and then begin softly humming one of those slow airs, the sweet plaintive motive of which always lightens the heart of the singer. One of us would sing and the rest would at first listen silently; the song would tremble and die away beneath the dark ceiling of our cellar, like a tiny camp-fire in the steppes on a damp autumn night, when the grey sky spreads over the earth like a leaden roof. Another voice would join in—and two voices would now be floating softly and plaintively in the thick atmosphere of our over-crowded pit. And suddenly, several more voices would join, and the song would rise like a wave; it would grow louder and louder and almost seem to move the heavy grey walls of our stone prison. . . .

The whole twenty-six would be singing, our powerful harmonious voices filling the bakehouse until it seemed too small to hold so much sound. The song would beat against the stone walls, wailing and moaning, filling the heart with a sweet, stirring pain, opening old wounds and awakening despair. The singers would sigh deeply and heavily; one man would suddenly stop in his song and sit for a while listening to his comrades, then again his voice would mingle with the general wave. Or one would cry out desperately, "Ah!" then go on singing with his eyes closed, the rich wave of sound

perhaps seeming to him like some distant path, a broad sunlit path along which he himself was walking.

But the flame was still flickering in the stove, the baker was still scraping with his shovel, the water was still simmering in the pot, and the reflection of the fire was still dancing on the walls in silent mockery. And in other men's words we sang of our dull grief and of the leaden despair of living men deprived of the sun, the despair of the slave.

Thus we lived, the twenty-six of us, in the cellar of the large stone house, and our burden was as heavy as though the whole weight of the three storeys of the house were resting on our very shoulders. But we had something else that was good besides the singing—something that we loved and that perhaps took the place of the sunshine we lacked. On the second floor of our house was a gold-embroiderer's shop, and in it, amongst the many girls who worked there, lived Tania, the sixteen-year-old maid-servant. Every morning her little rosy face with the sparkling blue eyes would peep through the little window of the door leading into the passage, and her caressing, ringing voice would call out to us :

" Prisoners ! have you any little krendels for me ? "

We would all turn at this clear, joyous sound so familiar to us and gaze good-humouredly at the little maiden face, smiling so sweetly. We liked to see the little nose pressed against the glass, the tiny white teeth, shining between the rosy lips, parted in a smile. We all rushed to open the door for her, tumbling over each other. And she would come in—the gay little thing—and stand before us, smiling and holding up her apron. Her long-nut-brown plait that was jerked over her shoulder lay across her breast. And we, black, dirty, misshapen, would look up at her (the threshold being higher than the floor by several steps) and bid her good-morning in specially chosen words we kept only for her. When talking to her our very voices grew softer and our jokes came more easily. There was something special in everything we did for her. The baker would thrust his shovel into the oven and take out the brownest krendels he could find, which he deftly threw into Tania's apron.

" Take care the master does not catch you ! " we always cautioned her. She would laugh roguishly, call out gaily, " Good-bye, prisoners ! " and vanish like a little mouse.

That was all. . . . But long after she was gone we enjoyed talking about her to each other ; we said the very same things we had spoken yesterday and the day before, because both she and we and everything around us was the same as yesterday and the day before. It is hard and painful for a man when nothing around him changes, and if it does not have the effect of destroying his soul utterly, then the longer he lives the more painful becomes

the monotony of his surroundings. In our talk of women, our coarse, shameless words would sometimes disgust even ourselves. It may be that the women we knew were not worthy of other words. But we never spoke badly of Tania. Not a single man among us would have dared to touch her with his hand, and we never made a loose joke in her presence. Perhaps it was because she never stayed long enough with us, for, like a falling star, she would flash out for a moment and vanish, or it may be that she was so small and pretty, and beauty inspires respect even in the coarsest of men. And besides, though the hard work had deprived us of will-power, we were nevertheless men, and needed something to worship. We had no one better than Tania, no one but Tania ever paid the least attention to us inhabitants of the cellar, though there were scores of people in the house. And the most important thing of all is that we looked upon her as belonging to us, a being that seemed to exist solely by virtue of our krendels. We made it a duty to keep her supplied with them, piping hot ; it became a daily offering to our idol, an almost holy rite, that bound us closer to her day by day. In addition to the krendels we used to give Tania advice, such as that she ought to put on warmer clothes, that she ought not to run quickly up the stairs, nor to carry heavy bundles of wood. She would listen to us with a smile, reply to our words with a laugh, and never take the least notice of what we said. This in no way offended us ; we were merely anxious to show her that we cared for her.

Frequently she would come to us with some request, such as asking us to open the heavy cellar door or chop some wood, and with a kind of pride and joy we would do all that she demanded of us.

But when one of us asked her to mend his one and only shirt, she sniffed disdainfully and said, "What an idea ! as if I could !"

We laughed at the bold man and never made any further demands on her. We loved her, and that is saying much. A man always wants to bestow his love on some one, even though he sometimes spoils and sullies his love, even though he may ruin the life of another, because he loves without respecting the beloved. We could not help loving Tania because we had no one else to love.

Sometimes one of us would begin to criticise our attitude in this fashion :

"Why do we spoil the girl ? What is there in her after all ? We seem to take a lot of trouble over her."

The man who had dared to speak thus was soon rudely cut short. We had to love some one and we had found some one to love. The being we loved—the whole twenty-six of us—must be apart and sacred for each ; he who violates this thought is our

enemy. Perhaps the thing we loved was not really good, but, then, there were twenty-six of us, and because of that we wanted the thing that was dear to us respected by all alike.

Love is no less oppressive than hate ; perhaps that is why some clever people maintain that hate is more flattering than love. But if it is as they say, why do they run after us ?

Besides the krendel bakery our employer had a bread bakery in the same house, separated from our pit by a single wall. There were four bread bakers, but they avoided us, considering their work cleaner than ours. They never came to visit us, and made fun of us whenever we met in the yard. Neither did we visit them. Our employer forbade us to do so, fearing that we might steal some milk rolls. We did not like the bread bakers because we envied them ; their work was easier than ours, they were better paid and better fed than we were, they had a larger, brighter room than ours and were all such robust, clean-looking fellows, while we were sorry, yellow creatures. Three of us suffered from disease, one was covered with scabs, another completely deformed by rheumatism. In leisure hours and in the holidays the bread bakers would put on their smart pea-jackets and squeaky boots (a couple of them had concertinas too) and go out walking in the park, while we would wear our dirty rags, remnants of boots or bast shoes, and the police would not let us into it. No wonder we did not like the bread bakers !

One day it came to our ears that one of the bread bakers had got drunk, and that the master had sacked him and engaged another man. This man was reputed to be a soldier who went about in a satin waistcoat and wore a gold watch chain. We were curious to see this wonder and kept running out into the yard one after another in the hope of catching a glimpse of him.

But he came to us of himself. With a kick he opened the door, and, standing on the threshold, smiling, he said to us :

“ God be with you. Good-morning, mates ! ”

The icy air, coming in a dense cloud at the door, played about his legs ; he stood on the threshold looking down at us, and his yellow teeth shone beneath his fair, well-twisted moustache. He certainly wore some peculiar waistcoat of a bluish shade, embroidered with flowers ; it seemed to shine and sparkle, and the buttons were of some red stone. The chain, too, was there.

He was handsome, this soldier, tall and robust, with rosy cheeks, and a clear kindly expression in his bright blue eyes. On his head was a starched cap, and from beneath his clean apron that had not a single crease in it there peeped the pointed toes of his highly polished boots.

Our own baker deferentially requested him to close the door, which he did slowly, and then began asking us questions about our employer. Vying with each other, we told him that our master was a sweater, a scoundrel, a blackguard—everything, in fact, that it behoves one to say of an employer, but it is impossible to set it down here.

The soldier listened, curling his moustache and looking at us with his bright tender eyes. . . .

"Are there many girls here?" he asked suddenly.

Some of us began to laugh deferentially, while others with knowing grimaces explained to him that there were nine girls in all.

"Do you make the most of your opportunities?" the soldier asked with a wink.

Again we laughed, a soft, confused laugh. . . . Many of us would have liked to make the soldier believe that we were fellows just as smart as he was, but not one of us could do it; not one of us knew how. Some one even confessed as much, saying softly:

"That is not for the likes of us. . . ."

"Yes, it would be difficult for you, certainly," the soldier remarked with assurance, looking us up and down. "It's hardly in your line. You have no bearing . . . no figures, no presence, so to speak. A woman is particular about a man's appearance. His figure must be good and he must be well dressed. And then a woman admires strength in a man. He should have an arm, like this, see!"

The soldier pulled his right hand out of his pocket and showed us his arm, bare to the elbow. It was a white powerful arm, covered with shining, golden hair.

"The leg, the chest—everything must be firm. And, again, a man must be decently dressed to show off his good looks. Take me, for instance; all the women love me. I don't raise a finger to beckon them, but they throw themselves at my head, five at a time. . . ."

He sat down on a sack of flour and went on telling us how all the women loved him and how gallantly he treated them. At last he went away, and when the door shut after him with a squeak we were silent for a long time, thinking of the soldier and of his tales. But suddenly we all began to speak, and it was soon evident that we had taken a fancy to him one and all. Such a nice simple fellow he was—he came and sat and talked to us. No one ever came to see us, or spoke to us in such a friendly way. And we talked of him and of his future conquests among the embroidresses, who, when meeting us outside, would sidle by us or walk straight at us as though unaware of our presence. And always we never more than dared to admire them, out of doors or when they passed our

window, in the winter dressed in peculiar coats and caps, and in the summer in hats with many coloured flowers and parasols in their hands. Still, among ourselves, we talked of these girls in such a way that had they heard us they would have gone mad with shame and vexation.

"I hope he won't spoil our Tanushka!" the baker remarked suddenly with concern.

None of us spoke, struck by his words. We had forgotten about Tania; the soldier had hidden her from us, as it were, with his big handsome figure. Then a dispute arose, some maintaining that Tania would not degrade herself so far, others that she would not be able to resist the soldier, and a third lot declared that if the soldier began to worry Tania we should have to break his ribs for him. At last we all decided to watch Tania and the soldier carefully, and to warn the girl against him. This ended the dispute.

A month went by; the soldier baked his bread, walked with the embroidresses, often came to visit us, but never spoke about his conquests among the girls; he would only curl his moustache and lick his lips. Tania came to us every morning for "the little krendels," and was just as sweet, merry, and friendly to us as usual. We tried to talk to her about the soldier; she called him a "goggle-eyed calf" and other funny names, and this allayed our fears.

We were proud of her, seeing how the embroidresses ran after the soldier. Tania's attitude towards him seemed to raise us all, and we, as though responsible for her attitude, began to assume a scornful air in our relations to the soldier. And we grew to love Tania still more, and still more gladly and good-naturedly did we greet her in the morning.

But one day the soldier came to us a little the worse for drink, and, sitting down, began to laugh, and when we asked him what he was laughing about, he explained.

"Two of the girls have quarrelled over me. . . . How they did knock each other about! ha, ha! One seized the other by the hair and threw her on the floor in the passage and sat on her . . . ha, ha, ha! They scratched and tore . . . you would have died! Why can't a woman fight fair? Why must she always scratch and pull?"

He sat on the bench, robust and clean and joyous—sat there and laughed. We were silent. We did not like him just then.

"How the women do run after me, to be sure! It's really funny. I've only to wink and they come—the devil!"

He raised his white hands covered with the shining hair and

slapped them down on his knees. He looked at us with such a pleasantly surprised air, as though he himself were frankly astonished at the happiness he found in his success with women. His fat rosy cheeks shone with self-satisfaction, and he kept on licking his lips.

Our baker gave a quick angry scrape with his shovel over the hearth and suddenly said with derision :

" It doesn't take much to cut down a little sapling, but you try a big pine tree."

" Is that for me ? " asked the soldier.

" Yes, you."

" What do you mean ? "

" Nothing. . . . It slipped out."

" But wait. What is it all about ? What pine ? "

Our baker did not reply, but kept on quickly plying his shovel, putting in the boiled krendels, taking out the baked ones and throwing them noisily on the floor, where the boys were busy stringing them together. He seemed to have forgotten both the soldier and the conversation. The soldier, however, suddenly fell into a state of restlessness. He rose and walked up to the stove, very nearly knocking himself against the handle of the shovel the baker was flourishing wildly in the air.

" But you must tell me what you mean. I am hurt. Not a single girl can resist me, I assure you, and you say such offensive things."

He was genuinely hurt ; it may be that besides the capacity for leading women astray there was nothing else he could be proud of ; perhaps this capacity was the only living thing about him, the only thing that enabled him to feel himself a man.

There are some men in whom the best and highest in life appears only as a kind of malady of the soul or the body which they carry about with them all their lives, living by it, suffering from it, complaining about it, and by their complaints attracting the attention of others towards them. It is their only means of gaining the sympathy of their fellows ; they have no other. Deprive them of this malady, cure them and they will be unhappy, because you take away from them their only hold on life and leave them quite empty. A man's life is sometimes so empty that he involuntarily prizes his vice and lives by it ; one might almost say that men are often vicious from sheer boredom.

The soldier was offended, and again demanded loudly of our baker :

" You must tell me what you mean ! "

" Shall I ? " the baker turned to him suddenly.

" Well ? "

"Do you know Tania?"

"Yes, what then?"

"Well, try her, that's all!"

"I?"

"Yes, you."

"Pooh! That's as easy as winking!"

"We shall see."

"You will see! ha, ha!"

"She will send you . . ."

"Give me a month."

"What a braggart you are, soldier!"

"Give me two weeks! I'll show you! And who is Tania, anyway? Pooh!"

"Get away . . . you hinder me!"

"Two weeks and it's done. You are a . . ."

"Get away, I tell you!"

Our baker was seized with a sudden fit of fury and brandished his shovel in the air. The soldier edged away from him quickly, in astonishment. He looked at us in silence for a moment and then said quietly and maliciously:

"Very well." Then he left us.

We were so interested in the dispute that none of us had spoken, but when the soldier had gone, a noisy animated conversation arose among us.

Some one called out to the baker:

"It's a nasty job you've started, Pavel!"

"You get on with your work!" the baker replied angrily.

We felt that the soldier had been touched to the quick and that Tania was threatened by danger. Yet, in spite of this, we were seized by an agreeable burning curiosity to know what would happen. Would Tania resist the soldier? And almost all cried out confidently:

"Tania! Of course she will! It would take more than the bare hands to get Tania!"

We were seized by a passionate desire to test the strength of our goddess. With intensity we tried to convince each other that our goddess was invincible and would come out of the ordeal victorious. It seemed to us now that we had not sufficiently provoked the soldier. We feared that he might forget the dispute, and resolved to wound his vanity still further. Our life from that day became peculiarly tense and exciting. We argued with each other all day; our brains seemed to have grown clearer and we had more and more to talk about. It seemed to us that we were playing some game with the devil and that the stake on our side was Tania. And when we heard from the bread bakers that the soldier had

begun "courting" Tania, such a painfully sweet sensation came over us, and life seemed to us so interesting that we did not even notice when our employer, taking advantage of the general excitement, added another fourteen poods of dough to the day's work. The whole day the name of Tania did not leave our lips. And every morning we waited for her with a kind of peculiar impatience. Sometimes it seemed to us that she wanted to come right into our room—and that would not have been the old Tania, but some one quite new and strange to us.

However, we told her nothing of the current dispute. We asked her no questions and treated her kindly and considerately as usual. But something new and strange had crept into our feelings towards her, and this new thing was a poignant curiosity, sharp and cold as a steel knife.

"The time is up, mates!" our baker announced one morning, stopping in his work.

We knew quite well without his reminding us, but nevertheless we all started.

"Look at her well . . . she is coming soon," our baker continued. And some one remarked sorrowfully: "As if you could see that with the eye!"

And again a heated noisy discussion arose among us. To-day we should know at last how pure was the vessel into which we had poured all that was best in us. This morning, for the first time, we realised that we were really playing a great game, that this test of her purity might end by depriving us of our goddess altogether. We had heard how persistently the soldier had been pursuing Tania during the whole fortnight, but not one of us had thought of asking her how she behaved towards him. And she continued coming each morning for the krendels and was just the same to us as ever.

On this day, too, we soon heard her voice:

"Prisoners! Here I am! . . ."

We opened the door, and when she came in, contrary to our usual practice, we greeted her in silence. With all our eyes fixed on her we did not know what to say or what to ask of her. We stood before her, a dark, silent crowd. She was evidently taken aback at this unaccustomed reception. We saw her suddenly turn pale; she grew uneasy, and shifting about in her place asked in a depressed tone of voice:

"Why are you . . . like this?"

"And you?" the baker demanded of her solemnly without taking his eyes off her.

"What about me?"

"Nothing."

"Well, be quick and give me the krendels!"

Never before had she hurried us.

"You've got plenty of time!" the baker said, without moving from the spot, or taking his eyes off her face.

But she suddenly turned and vanished through the door.

The baker took up his shovel and said quietly, as though addressing himself to the stove:

"I suppose it's done! That blackguard of a soldier! The scoundrel!"

Pushing past each other like a flock of sheep, we sat down silently at the table and lazily continued our work. Soon some one began:

"But perhaps it is . . ."

"Shut up, do!" the baker cried out.

We all knew that he was a man of common-sense, and cleverer than we were. We took his cry as a sign of the soldier's conquest. We were sad and uneasy. . . .

At twelve o'clock, during the dinner hour, the soldier came in. He was as clean and well dressed as usual, and as usual looked us straight in the eye. To see him made us uncomfortable.

"Well, my good people, would you like to see what a soldier can do? Go into the passage and peep through the crack. . . . Do you understand?"

We went out tumbling over each other and glued our faces to the crack in the wall leading into the outer vestibule. We had not long to wait. Soon, with hurried step and anxious face, Tania came walking along the yard, skipping over the puddles of melted snow and mud. She vanished into the door of the cellar. Not long after, slowly and humming an air, the soldier followed her. His hands were thrust into his pockets and his moustache was quivering. . . .

It was raining. We saw the drops of rain fall into the puddles and make rings in them as they fell.

It was damp and grey—a dull, depressing day. The snow still lay on the roofs, and the earth was already covered with dark patches of mud. The snow on the roofs, too, was soft and brown and dirty. The rain fell slowly with a dull, monotonous sound. The waiting was cold and dreary.

The soldier was the first to come out of the cellar. He walked along the yard slowly, his moustache quivering, his hand in his pockets—the same as we had always seen him.

Then Tania came out. Her eyes were sparkling with joy and happiness and her lips were parted in a smile. She walked as though in her sleep, with uncertain tread, swaying from side to side. . . .

This was more than we could bear. We all rushed out of the

door into the yard and began hissing and shouting at her, maliciously and wildly.

She started when she saw us and stopped still as though thunder-struck, stopped in the mud beneath her feet. We surrounded her and malignantly, unrestrainedly, began pouring abuse on her in our filthy, shameless words.

We did not make much noise about it, we did not hurry, seeing that she could not escape us. We just surrounded her and mocked her to our heart's content. I do not know why we did not strike her. She stood in our midst, turning her head this way and that, listening to our insults while we, more and more fiercely, went on bespattering her with the filth and poison of our words.

The colour left her cheeks. Her blue eyes, so happy a moment ago, opened wide; her breath came quick and sharp and her lips trembled.

And we surrounding her, punished her as though she had robbed us. She belonged to us; we had lavished on her the best that was in us, and though this was no more than a beggar's crumb, still, there were twenty-six of us and she was alone, and because of that we could not think of torments enough that would match her guilt. What insults we poured on her while she stood there wild-eyed, staring at us and shaking like a leaf. We laughed and bellowed and roared. Other people joined us from somewhere. One man pulled Tania by the sleeve.

Suddenly her eyes flashed; she raised her arms slowly and straightened her hair, then she said slowly and calmly, looking straight into our faces:

"You miserable prisoners!"

And she walked straight at us as though we were not there barring her way. And in fact no one barred her way, for we all moved aside to let her pass.

Walking out of our midst, without so much as a turn of the head, she said loudly and with an indescribable contempt:

"You brutes! . . . You scum of the earth!"

And was gone.

We were left in the yard in the mud and rain, beneath the grey sunless sky.

Soon we too went back to our stone pit. The sun as before never peeped in at our window and Tania never came to see us again.

MAXIM GORKY

COMRADES

I

THE hot July sun shone brightly over Smolkina, bathing the old huts in its bounteous, brilliant rays. It poured down with particular force on the roof of the elder's hut, recently re-covered with smoothly-planed deal boards, yellow and fragrant. It was Sunday, and the whole population were in the street, thickly overgrown with grass and strewn with clumps of dried mud. A large crowd of peasants—men and women—gathered about the elder's hut; some were sitting on the earthen seat, others on the ground, and still others were standing. In and out among them, chasing one another, ran the little children, receiving now a cross word, now a blow, from one of the elders.

In the middle of the crowd was a tall man with a large overhanging moustache. From his tanned face, covered with a thick, bristly beard and a net of bluish wrinkles, from the tufts of grey hair that peeped out beneath his straw hat, one would have guessed that the man was fifty. He was staring on the ground; the nostrils of his long, gristly nose trembled, and when he raised his head to glance at the elder's hut one could see that his eyes were sad and solemn; they were deep set in their orbits and the bushy eyebrows cast a dark shade over them. He was dressed as a lay-brother, in a brown, torn cassock that barely covered his knees, and was pulled in at the waist by a piece of cord. A wallet was slung over his shoulder, in his right hand he carried a long staff with an iron tip, his left hand was thrust into his bosom. The people surrounding him eyed him suspiciously, with derision and contempt; they were manifestly overjoyed at having caught the wolf before he had brought any harm to their flock. When passing through the village he had gone up to the elder's window and asked for a drink. The elder had given him some kvas and tried to enter into conversation with him, but contrary to the habit of most strangers he had replied to the elder's questions unwillingly. The elder

asked for his papers, but it turned out that he had none. And the man was detained, it being decided to take him to the volost. The elder chose the village policeman as his convoy, and was now in the hut getting him ready for the journey while the prisoner remained outside amid the laughter and jeers of the crowd.

The prisoner had been placed by a willow, and he stood there leaning his bent back against it.

A mole-eyed old man with a foxy face and a grey pointed beard appeared on the doorstep. Sedately he lowered his legs, in long boots, from one step to the other, and his round belly shook solidly beneath his long printed-cotton shirt. Behind his shoulder the square, bearded face of the policeman could be seen.

"Do you understand, Efimushka?" the elder asked of the policeman.

"It doesn't take much understanding—I know all. I, the Smolian-sky policeman, have got to take this man to the magistrate, and nothing more!" He said these words slowly, with a comic solemnity, and winked at the crowd.

"And the paper?"

"The paper is in my bosom."

"All right, then!" the elder said approvingly, then scratching his side violently, he added: "Go, then, and God be with you!"

"Shall we go . . . march, eh, Father?" The policeman said, smiling to the prisoner.

"They might let us have a cart at least," the latter responded. The elder laughed.

"A cart? What next? There are many of your feather tramping through the fields and villages . . . there are not enough horses for you all. You can get there very well on foot. The idea!"

"Never mind, Father, let us start," the policeman said encouragingly. "We haven't got far to go; only about a score of versts in all, with God's will. Not so much, perhaps. We'll get there quickly enough, you and I—and then you can rest . . ."

"In a cell," the elder added.

"Never you mind," the policeman went on hastily; "a man can rest even in prison when he's tired. And then a cell is very cool after a hot day—not at all bad, I assure you!"

The prisoner looked his convoy up and down; the latter was smiling with a frank, jolly smile.

"Come along, good Father! Good-bye, Vasil Gavrilitch! Come along!"

"God be with you, Efimushka . . . Keep your two eyes open."

"See with your three!" some young fellow in the crowd called after the policeman.

"Do you think I'm a baby?"

They started, keeping close to huts in the strip of shade. The man in the cassock walked ahead, languidly at first, and then in the brisk gait of a person accustomed to the road. The policeman, with a stout stick in his hand, followed behind him.

Efimushka was a short, thick-set peasant with a broad, kindly face, encircled by a flaxen, tufty beard that began from his clear grey eyes. He was nearly always smiling for some reason, exposing his strong yellow teeth and screwing up his nose as though he wanted to sneeze. He was dressed in an overcoat, the skirts of which were tucked into his belt so that they should not impede the movement of his legs; on his head was a dark green cap without a peak, pulled low over his forehead in front and looking very like a prisoner's cap.

His companion walked on without taking the least notice of him, as though he were absolutely unconscious of his presence behind. They were walking along a narrow winding lane through a sea of waving rye, and their shadows crept over the golden ears.

On the horizon was the blue crest of a wood; to the left, away in the endless distance, stretched the sown fields; a village lay like a dark patch in the middle, and beyond, again fields, lost in the azure mist.

To the right, behind the clump of willows, was a newly tinned church spire that had not yet been painted, sparkling so brightly in the sun that it was painful for the eyes to behold.

The larks were singing in the sky, the cornflowers shone among the rye—it was hot, oppressive. The dust rose from beneath the pedestrians' feet.

Efimushka was bored. A terrible gossip by nature, he could not be silent long. Expecterating on the ground, he suddenly began singing in a drawling falsetto voice:

"Oh—oh, why-y . . . Oh, why—does my heart ache so . . .?"

"No voice to-day, damn it! And there was a time when I could sing well . . . One Vishinsky schoolmaster used to say to me, 'Go on, Efimushka, begin!' And how we used to sing together, he and I. A splendid fellow he was!"

"Who was he?" the man in cassock asked in a hoarse voice.

"The Vishinsky schoolmaster."

"Is Vishinsky his name?"

"Vishinsky is a village, brother. The schoolmaster's name was Pavel Michailovitch. A first-rate man he was. He died three years ago."

"Was he young?"

"Barely thirty."

"What did he die of?"

"Grief, I suppose."

Efimushka's interlocutor gave him a sidelong glance and smiled.

"It was like this, you see, my good man. He taught and taught for seven whole years and then he began to cough. He coughed and grieved, and grieved and coughed, and from grief I suppose he took to drink. And Father Alexai did not like him, and when he began to drink he sent a letter to the town saying this and that—that the schoolmaster's drinking was a temptation to others. And a reply came from the town to the schoolmistress. A tall, bony woman she was with a big nose. Well, Pavel Michailovitch could see that the game was up. And he grieved the more. 'I taught and taught . . . and this is the end, confound it!' He went straight from the school into the hospital, and in five days his soul had passed away to God . . . That is the whole story. . . ."

For a time they walked on in silence. The wood was getting nearer and nearer with each step, rising up before the eyes of the travellers and turning from blue to green.

"Are we going through the wood?" Efimushka's companion asked.

"For a mile or two on the edge. But why do you ask? Ah, you! You are a goose, my good Father, when I look at you!"

And Efimushka laughed, shaking his head.

"What do you mean?" the prisoner asked.

"Oh, nothing. Ah, you! 'Are we going by the wood?' he asks. You are too simple, my good man; another would not have asked at all. A man cleverer than you would have gone straight into the wood and . . ."

"What?"

"Nothing. I can see through and through you, brother, with all your trickeries. You just give up that idea about the wood, for you have to reckon with me. I can manage three men like you single-handed. Did I guess right?"

"You did, you fool!" the prisoner replied, curtly and expressively.

"I did guess right, you see?" Efimushka said triumphantly.

"What did you guess, you scarecrow?" the prisoner asked with a crooked smile.

"About the wood . . . I understand. 'When I come to the wood,' you said to yourself, 'then I will hack him to pieces . . . that is me . . . and bury him in the fields or in the wood.' Wasn't that it?"

"You fool . . ." the prisoner said, shrugging his shoulders. "Where could I escape to?"

"Where you liked, of course . . . that is your own affair."

"But where?" Efimushka's companion asked this partly in

anger and partly it seemed in curiosity, as though he really wanted his convoy to tell him where he was to go.

"I have told you, wherever you like!" Efimushka said calmly.

"I have nowhere to escape to, brother, nowhere!" his companion said softly.

"Oh, well! . . ." the convoy pronounced the words incredulously, with a wave of the hand.

"There is always somewhere to run. The earth is wide enough. A man can always find a place in it somewhere."

"But what has that to do with you? Do you want me to run away?" the prisoner queried with a smile.

"How you do talk, to be sure! Do you call it reason? If you run away, whom do you think they will put into prison? Me, of course! No, I only said that for the sake of talking. . . ."

"You are a simpleton . . . however, you seem a decent sort of peasant . . ." Efimushka's companion said, with a sigh.

Efimushka was not slow in agreeing with him.

"You are right; some people do call me a simpleton . . . and as for being a decent peasant, that is also true. I am simple by nature, that is the main reason. Some folk are always ready to take advantage of you by all manner of cunning, but what has that to do with me? I am all alone in the world. A man may live by cunning and he dies, he may live a straightforward life and he dies also. And I am always on the side of straightforwardness."

"That is well said!" Efimushka's companion remarked indifferently.

"What else should I be? Why should I blacken my soul when I am all alone here? I am a free man, brother, I live as I like—I spend my life according to my own lights . . . yes . . . What is your name? . . ."

"What? . . . Well . . . Ivan Ivanov, if you like."

"So . . . Are you of the clergy?"

"N-no . . ."

"Really? And I thought you belonged to the clergy . . ."

"Was that because of my clothes?"

"Why, yes . . . In appearance you are something like a runaway monk or a deposed priest . . . But as for your face, that is different. Your face looks more like a soldier's. . . . God knows what sort of a man you are!" And Efimushka cast a glance at the stranger full of curiosity. The latter sighed, straightened the hat on his head, and wiping the perspiration from his brow, asked:

"Do you smoke?"

"Why, of course! No need to ask!"

He pulled a greasy pouch out of his bosom and, bending his head, began filling a clay pipe, without arresting his walk.

"There, smoke it!"

The prisoner stopped, and leaning over towards the match his convoy had lighted, took a deep pull at the pipe. The blue smoke floated through the air.

"Then what kind of people do you come from? Are you a burgess?"

"A nobleman," the prisoner replied curtly, expectorating to one side on the ears of corn, already covered with a golden sheen.

"Oh, oh, really? Then how do you come to be walking about without a passport?"

"Because I want to."

"Well, well, did you ever? . . . The gentry is hardly used to this kind of wandering life, eh? You unfortunate man!"

"Stop your gossip . . . we've had enough now," the unfortunate man said drily.

But Efimushka, with an increasing sympathy and curiosity, looked at the passportless man and, shaking his head pensively, continued:

"Dear, dear! How fate plays with a man, if you only stop to think of it! I believe you must belong to the gentry; you have such a fine carriage. Is it long since you've led this sort of life?"

The man with the fine carriage gave Efimushka a severe look and shook him off with his hand, as one would a troublesome wasp.

"Shut up, I tell you! Why will you bother me like a woman?"

"Don't you be angry with me," Efimushka said soothingly. "I ask out of sheer kindness . . . I have a very kind heart. . . ."

"That is your good fortune. . . . And the fact that your tongue keeps on wagging incessantly is my misfortune."

"All right, I won't talk. A man can be silent when some one does not want to listen to his conversation. But you haven't any cause to be angry . . . It isn't my fault that you've had to live like a tramp, is it?"

The prisoner stopped and pressed his teeth so firmly together that his cheek-bones stood out sharply and his grey beard bristled. He stared Efimushka up and down from head to foot with half-closed eyes that flashed fire.

But before Efimushka had had time to observe this dumb show, he was again measuring the distance with his long strides.

The face of the talkative policeman expressed a bewildered sadness. He stared up at the sky, at the twittering larks, whistled to them through his teeth, and marched on rhythmically, beating time with his long stick.

They reached the edge of the wood. It stood immovable, like a dark wall, and not a sound was borne from it to the travellers. The sun has set, and his slanting rays bathed the tops of the trees in

purple and gold. A fragrant moisture came from the trees, and the darkness and tense stillness reigning in the wood created a weird, uncanny feeling.

When a wood stands before the eyes dark and immovable and wrapt in a mysterious stillness, when each tree appears to be straining for some sound, it gives you the impression that the whole place is full of living creatures who are only in temporary hiding, and you wait for the moment when suddenly something vast will emerge, incomprehensible to the human brain—something that will speak in a powerful voice of the mighty mysteries of creative nature. . . .

II

When they reached the edge of the wood Efimushka and his companion decided to rest for a while, and sat down on the grass by the broad stump of an oak. The prisoner slowly took his wallet from his shoulder, and turned to the policeman casually :

“ Would you like some bread ? ”

“ I will eat it, if you give it me.”

And silently they both began to chew bread. Efimushka chewed his slowly, sighing and staring fixedly at some spot on the fields to the left, while his companion, completely absorbed in the process of appeasing his hunger, ate quickly and munched loudly, measuring the remaining piece with his eyes. The fields were getting darker ; the corn had already lost its golden hue and turned to a reddish yellow ; to the south-west rugged clouds were floating in the sky, casting their shadows on the fields and creeping over the ears of corn till they touched the spot where the two human forms were sitting. The trees, too, cast their shadows over the earth, bringing a feeling of sadness into the heart.

“ The Lord be praised ! ” Efimushka said, gathering together the remaining crumbs into the palm of his hand, and licking them up with his tongue. “ God gave the bread and no eye has seen, or having seen has not offended ! Shall we rest here for an hour or so, friend ? We’ll get to the cell in time, eh ? ”

The friend nodded.

“ Well, now . . . what a nice place this is, to be sure. I know it well. . . . Over there to the left used to be the Tuchkov’s estate—gentry of these parts. . . . ”

“ Where ? ” the prisoner asked quickly, turning to the spot indicated by Efimushka.

“ Over there . . . beyond that jutting-out bit. All the land around here used to be theirs. Rich gentry they were, but they went to pieces after the emancipation. . . . I belonged to them too ; all the peasants here belonged to them. They were a large family

... There was the ~~the~~ ail himself, Alexander Nikititch Tuchkov, and his children, ~~ould~~. . . I wonder where they are all now? The wind seems to ~~but~~ people away like leaves in the autumn. Only one of them remains. . . . It is to him that I am taking you. . . . He is our magistrate—an old man now. . . .”

The prisoner laughed with a curiously choking, inward laugh; his bosom and belly were shaking, but his face was set, the hoarse rasping sounds issuing from between his parted teeth.

“What is the matter? What ails you, eh?”

“Nothing; it will soon pass off, the prisoner replied abruptly, though kindly. “Go on with your story. . . .”

“Yes. . . . Well, you see, it was like this. . . . There lived these Tuchkovs, and now they are no more . . . some of them died, others disappeared, so that not a breath or a trace of them remains. There was one in particular, the youngest . . . Victor he was called . . . Vitia. He and I used to be chums. . . . At the time of the emancipation we must both have been about fourteen years old. . . . What a boy he was, to be sure, the Lord have pity on his soul! As pure and impetuous as a stream! Where is he now? Alive or dead, I wonder?”

“What was so particularly nice about him?” the prisoner asked softly.

“Everything!” Efimushka exclaimed. “His beauty, his mind, his kindness of heart. If only you could have seen the two of us, you dear, strange man. Dear, dear! What games we used to play, to be sure! How jolly it was! How we enjoyed ourselves! He had a gun—a birthday present from his father—I used to carry it sometimes. We would disappear into the woods for two or three days at a time, and when we’d get back there would be a scolding for him and a whacking for me. But we’d be off again the next day just the same. ‘Efimka, let’s go and gather mushrooms!’ he would say. We must have gathered poods of these mushrooms, and as for birds, we killed thousands of them. And then he used to collect butterflies and beetles and pin them down in a box . . . It was great sport. And he taught me to read. . . . ‘Efimka,’ he said, ‘I’m going to teach you to read.’ ‘All right!’ I said, and he began. . . . ‘Say A,’ he said, and I shouted, ‘A, A!’ and we both laughed. At first I treated it as a joke—what is the use of reading to a peasant? But he would scold me. ‘Your freedom has been given you,’ he said, ‘so that you may learn. If you can read,’ he said, ‘then you’ll know how to live and where to look for the truth. Children, as we know, are very imitative’; he must have heard his elders say that and repeated it. It is all nonsense, of course; learning is in the heart and the heart will point to the truth . . . the heart is all-seeing. . . . And he took to teaching me, got so fond of it, in fact, that he gave

me no peace. He would wear me out. from then I would say to him, 'it's no good; I can't learn to read, I can't wood when he would bawl at me: 'I'll get father's cane if you don't' at once!' 'All right, all right! I'm ready!' One day I jumped up from my lesson and ran straight away. He searched for me the whole day with his gun, and wanted to shoot me. 'I would have shot you if I had found you that day,' he said to me afterwards. That's the sort of boy he was! Fiery, self-willed—a real gentleman. . . . He used to be fond of me. . . . One day my father was belabouring my back with the straps when Vitia came into our hut and saw him. My word! You should have seen what followed! He turned deadly pale and shaking all over, clenched his fists and went for my father. 'How dare you!' he said. 'I'm his father,' my father said. 'Ah! we shall see, father! I can't manage you alone, but your back will one day be like Efimka's.' After these words he burst into tears and ran out of the room. And what do you think, Father? He kept his word. He must have told the servants, for one day my father comes home groaning; he wants to take his shirt off, but it has stuck to his skin. . . . He was furious with me that day. 'This is what I've suffered for you, you hanger-on' . . . and he gave it me, too. . . . As for being a hanger-on, I was never that . . ."

"No, Efim, never!" the prisoner said resolutely, trembling all over. "As I see you now, you could never have been a hanger-on," he added hastily.

"That's just it!" Efimushka exclaimed. "I simply loved that boy Vitia. . . . He was such a clever child; every one loved him, not only I. . . . What things he used to say! I can't remember them all—more than thirty years have gone by since then. . . . Oh, Lord! Where is he now? If he is alive he must be either in a very high position or in the very lowest depths . . . such is human life! It boils and bubbles and no sensible mess comes out of it. . . . And people go on perishing . . . how sorry one is for them, mortally sorry!" Efimushka gave a deep sigh and hung his head on his breast . . . there was a short pause.

"Are you sorry for me, too?" the prisoner asked gaily. His tone was particularly gay and the whole of his face was lighted up by a gentle, kindly smile.

"What a funny man you are!" Efimushka exclaimed. "Why shouldn't I be? Who are you, to be sure? Since you roam about as you do it is plain that you have nothing belonging to you in this world, not a corner or a bite. . . . And who knows but what you may be carrying some big sin about with you . . . you are an unfortunate man, to be sure. . . ."

"Yes," the prisoner said.

Again they were both silent. The sun had already set; the

shadows grew denser ; the air was filled with the scent of moist earth, flowers and forest mould. . . . For a long time they sat silent.

" It is very nice here, but we've got to go all the same. . . . We have another seven versts to tramp. . . . Come on, Father, get up ! "

" Let us sit here a little longer," the prisoner begged.

" That is all very well—I, too, like to be near a wood at night, only when shall we get to the magistrate's ? He will scold me for being so late."

" No, he won't."

" Why, will you say anything to him ? " the policeman asked, with a smile.

" I may."

" Oh, oh ! "

" Why not ? "

" He won't stand that, you fool ! "

" Will he strike me, do you think ? "

" He'll be furious ! He will give you such a whack on the ear that it will seem to you like having your legs mown down by a scythe."

" Never mind, we will pay him back with interest," the prisoner said confidently, with a friendly slap on his convoy's shoulder.

This seemed too familiar and Efimushka did not like it, for after all, he was an officer and the fool should not forget that he, Efimushka, had a brass medal hidden in his bosom. Efimushka rose to his full height, picked up his stick, exposed the medal on the very middle of his breast, and said severely :

" Come, get up ! "

" I won't."

Efimushka stared wide-eyed in perplexity and was silent for a moment, failing to understand the prisoner's sudden playful mood.

" Come, don't be lazy now," he said, more gently.

" I won't come ! " the prisoner repeated resolutely.

" You won't come ! What do you mean ? " Efimushka shouted with rage and astonishment.

" Nothing. I want to stop the night here with you . . . go along . . . light a fire. . . ."

" Stop the night, indeed ! As for a fire, I'll make your sides burn so that you will need no fire ! " Efimushka said threateningly. But in the depths of his heart he was nonplussed. A man refuses to come and seems to offer no resistance, he does not attempt to struggle, but just lies there quietly on the ground. What was he to do ?

" Don't shout, Efim," the prisoner counselled calmly.

Efimushka was silent once more, and shifting from one foot to the other he stared down at the prisoner with his large wide-open eyes.

The latter looked up at him and smiled. Efimushka was at a loss to know what to do.

Why had this tramp who had been so solemn and cross all the time suddenly become so indulgent? What if he were to fall upon him, tie his hands and give him a couple of blows on the neck? And, in the severest of official tones that he could command, Efimushka said:

"Get up, now, you loafer, or I will bind you and then you will have to come! Do you understand? Look sharp or I'll strike you!"

"Me?" the prisoner asked, with a smile.

"Do you think I couldn't?"

"Would you strike Vitia Tuchkov, Efim Grislov?"

"Be damned to you!" Efimushka exclaimed in amazement. "What's the matter with you? What the devil are you up to? Get up, I say!"

"Stop shouting, Efimushka, it is time you recognised me," the prisoner said with a calm smile, rising from the ground. "Aren't you going to greet me?" Efimushka stepped back from the hand extended to him and stared at the prisoner's face with wide-open eyes. His lips trembled and his face twitched. "Victor Alexandrovitch . . . is that really you?" he asked in a whisper.

"I will show you my papers if you like, or better still, I will remind you of some things of the past. . . . Do you remember how you fell into the wolf-trap in the Kamensky Wood? Or how I got caught on the branch of a tree when hunting for birds' nests and hung with my head down? Or how we stole the cream from the old dairy-woman, Petrovna, and the tales she used to tell us?"

Efimushka sat down heavily and began to laugh confusedly.

"Do you believe me now?" the prisoner asked, sitting down beside him; he looked into his face, and put his hand on his shoulder. Efimushka was silent. It was now quite dark around them. A faint rustling and murmuring could be heard in the wood; somewhere in the thicket a night bird cried mournfully; a cloud crept over the wood with a scarcely visible motion.

"Well, Efim. . . . Aren't you glad to see me? Or are you quite overcome? What a splendid chap you are! Just the same as you were when a boy, Efim. Won't you speak, Efim?"

Efimushka blew his nose violently into the skirt of his overcoat.

"Dear, dear, dear!" the prisoner said, shaking his head reproachfully. "Well, really, you should be ashamed of yourself! Nearly fifty years old and to carry on like this! Stop now!" He put his arm on the policeman's shoulder and shook him gently. The policeman gave a trembling laugh and then began to speak without looking at his companion.

"It is nothing. . . . It is only because I'm glad. . . . Is it really

you, you? I can hardly believe it. You . . . Vitia . . . and in this guise! Going to a cell. . . . No passport . . . nothing but bread to eat. . . . No tobacco. . . . My God! Is that as it should be? If only I were in your position and you the policeman. . . . It would be more fitting. But what has happened? How can I look you in the eyes? It was always a joy to think of you. . . . 'Vitia.' I used to think to myself sometimes . . . and the heart would nearly stop still. And now . . . My God . . . people wouldn't believe me if I told them. . . ."

He mumbled his broken phrases, his eyes fixed on his legs while his hand now clutched at his breast, now at his throat.

"Don't tell people anything about it; there's no need. And never mind. . . . It is not your fault, is it? Don't you worry about me . . . I've got my papers all right; I didn't show them to the elder because I didn't want to be recognised here. My brother Ivan will hardly put me in a cell; on the other hand, he will probably set me up again. . . . I shall live with him and you and I can go and hunt together again. . . . See how well everything will turn out!"

Vitia spoke these words soothingly, in the tone that grown people use when comforting a crying child. The moon had risen above the wood and seemed to float towards the cloud, lighting up its edges with silvery delicate opal shades. The quails screamed in the corn, somewhere a rail-bird cackled. The darkness drew denser.

"That is true," Efimushka began softly. "Ivan Alexandrovitch will be pleased to see his own brother again . . . and you will adapt yourself to the life **once** more. That is so . . . and we will go out shooting together. . . . Only it is not what I expected. I thought you would do things in life . . . and now, what has it come to? . . ."

Vitia Tuchkov laughed. "Oh, oh, Efimushka! I have done enough things in life. . . . I have squandered my inheritance, thrown up my work; I've been an actor, a clerk in a timber merchant's business; I've kept actors myself . . . tasted everything to the dregs . . . got head over ears in debt and **was** mixed up in some affair. . . . Oh dear! It has all been and gone!"

The prisoner waved his hand and laughed good-humouredly.

"I'm not a gentleman any more, Efimushka . . . I've got cured of that. What fine times you and I are going to have together, eh! Come, wake up!" ~

"Don't mind me . . ." Efimushka said in a depressed tone of voice: "I feel ashamed. I have talked such a lot of rubbish and nonsense to you . . . just like a peasant. . . . So you want to stop the night here? Shall I light a fire?"

"Yes, go on!"

The prisoner stretched himself on the ground on his back and the policeman disappeared into the thicket, whence a rustling and crackling of branches could soon be heard. In a little while Efimushka reappeared with a bundle of brushwood, and soon a tongue of flame was creeping gaily over the little mound of dry twigs.

The old comrades looked at it musingly as they sat opposite each other, in turn taking a pull at the clay pipe.

"Just like old times," Efimushka said sadly.

"Only the circumstances are different," Tuchkov said.

"Life is becoming more and more difficult. . . . See how it has broken you. . . ."

"We can't tell yet whether it has broken me or it . . ." Tuchkov said with a smile. A silence ensued.

"My God, Vitia! What a dilemma, to be sure!" Efimushka exclaimed sadly.

"Never mind. . . . What has been, has been," Tuchkov comforted him philosophically.

Behind them rose the dark wood like a wall, murmuring softly to itself; the flames crackled merrily in the fire around which the silent shadows danced, and an impenetrable darkness lay across the fields.

MAXIM GORKY

SIMPLE FOLK

I WALKED leisurely along the soft grey road among the corn that reached up to my chest. The road was so narrow that the crushed and broken ears lay in the ruts besmeared with tar.

The heavy ears swayed to and fro ; the mice ran noisily in the corn. In the sky overhead, larks and swallows could be seen, a sign that not far off there were a river and human habitations. My eyes, wandering over the sea of gold, searched for the sign of a steeple raised to the sky like the mast of a ship ; searched for trees that in the distance would look like sails ; but nothing could be seen except the rugged steppes that rolled down in soft inclines to the south-west—deserted like the sky and just as tranquil.

In the steppes you feel like a fly on a plate—when in its very heart you feel that the earth is the centre of the universe, embraced by the sun, surrounded by the stars, blinded by its beauty.

There it was—so vast—clothed in red—majestically dropping into the distant blue horizon among the snow-white clouds. The corn was sprinkled with the golden dust of the setting sun, the corn-flowers were already dark, and in the early evening stillness you could plainly hear the song of the earth.

The sky was covered with rosy, fan-shaped clouds—one of them touched my breast and, like Moses' rod, called to life a host of peaceful thoughts. I wanted to embrace the evening earth and whisper loving words to her, words such as had never been spoken before.

The heavens were sprinkled with stars and the earth was a star—the earth was sprinkled with men and I was a man ; roaming fearlessly over every path, seeing all the sorrow and joy of life, drinking the bitter and the sweet like the rest of mankind.

. . . I was hungry, and there had not been a scrap of bread in my wallet since morning. That hindered thought and was somewhat annoying. The earth was so rich, man had spent so much labour on her, yet some one was hungry. . . .

Suddenly the road turned to the right—the walls of corn moved

asunder, exposing a valley, at the bottom of which flowed a blue stream. A new bridge, as yellow as a turnip, stretched across it and was mirrored in the water. Seven white huts stood out against the slope beyond the bridge, and some tall thick poplars threw a deep shadow over them; a cropped stallion wandered among the silver-grey trunks, flapping his tail. There was a strong smell of smoke, tar, damp hempseed; the cackling of chickens; a baby cried wearily—soon it would go to sleep. Were it not for these sounds one might have thought the scene was the hasty sketch of some clever artist—the soft, tender colours he had used already fading in the sun.

In the half circle was a hut, a well, and next to it a small red chapel, tall and narrow, looking like a one-eyed sentry. A crane was bending to the earth, uttering its long cry; a peasant woman all in white was drawing water, stretching herself and raising her bare arms—she looked as though she might float away at any minute like a cloud. The well was surrounded by shiny black mud that looked like crushed velvet, and two boys of about three and five, naked to the waist, were silently kneading the mud with their yellow feet as though they wished to mix the red rays of the sun into it. This good work engaged my attention; I looked sympathetically at the boys, with real interest—the sun was at home in the mud, the deeper it penetrated the earth, the better for the earth and for man!

From above I could see everything as plainly as the palm of my hand. Seven huts on the farm—no work was to be had there—still it would be pleasant to gossip with the good folk in the evening. I walked over the bridge filled with the passionate desire to tell these people gay and wonderful stories—for you know this is as necessary to man as the bread he eats.

Coming towards me from under the bridge—as though a lump of soil had come to life—there rose up a powerful, unkempt, unshaven man, wearing baggy blue trousers and an open rough linen shirt, grey with dirt.

“Good evening!”

“The same to you. Where are you going?”

“What river is this?”

“This? Why, the Sagaidak, of course.”

On his large round head the grey curls floated in the wind; his moustache was clipped short, the ends hanging down like a Chinaman's. His little eyes stared at me sharply and distrustfully, obviously taking note of the numerous holes and patches in my garments. Sighing deeply, he pulled a long red-stemmed clay pipe out of his pocket and, screwing up his eyes, looked carefully into the black bowl and asked:

"Have you got a match?"

"Yes."

"Any tobacco?"

"A little."

He stood pensive for a while and looked towards the sun sinking among the clouds. Then he asked:

"Is it Moscow tobacco?"

"No, it's from Romensk-Rimorinka."

"Oh," he said, stroking his wrinkled nose; "good tobacco that!"

I could not very well go into the hut without the host, so I stood by his side until he should have finished his slow questions as to who I was, whence I came, where I was going, and for what reason—I was growing a little impatient, being anxious to approach him in some way.

"Work?" he drawled through his moustache. "There is no work here. What sort of work could there be now?"

He turned away and spat into the river.

On the opposite bank, waddling gravely, came mother goose, followed by her downy goslings; two little girls came behind them: one, somewhat larger than the goose, wore a red kerchief and had a stick in her hand; the other, white, fat, bandy-legged and staid, looked just like the bird.

"Yufim!" a piercing, unseen voice called out. The man turned his head and said approvingly:

"What a throat!"

Then he began to wriggle his dirty toes with their cracked skin, looked down at their broken nails, and at last said:

"Perhaps you can read and write?"

"Why do you ask?"

"Because if you can, you could read the book over a dead man."

This idea seemed to please him. A gay smile rippled over his flat face.

"Don't you consider that work?" he asked, turning to hide the twinkle in his eye. "I would give you ten kopeks and the dead man's shirt into the bargain."

"And—food?" I mused aloud.

"Naturally!"

"Where is the dead man?"

"In his hut. Will you come?"

We walked towards the back of the garden whence issued the cries.

"Yufim! Yufim!"

The shadows crept over the soft road towards us; behind the bushes, by the river, I could hear children's voices and the splashing of water; some one was planing a plank; the sound of sobbing floated into the air. The old man remarked leisurely:

"There was an old woman here who used to read; she was a marvel! They took her to town and she lost the use of her legs—a pity it was not her tongue. She was very useful—only too quarrelsome. . . ."

Just then a black puppy—about the size of a large frog—ran up to me, lifted its tail and legs and yapped threateningly, sniffing the air with its pink puppyish nose.

"Down!"

From behind somewhere, a young barefooted woman shot out and, clapping her hands angrily, cried out:

"Yufim! I keep calling and calling you!"

"As if I did not hear!"

"Where have you been?"

My companion silently showed her a yellow pear and led me into the yard belonging to the hut next door. The barefooted woman remained behind, sending a volley of abuse after us.

Two old women were sitting by the door of the little hut: the one, round and untidy—like an ill-used leather ball; the other, bony, bent in the back, with a dark, cross face. At their feet lay a huge dog as big as a sheep, with tangled coat, red watery eyes, and rough tongue hanging out. Yufim related every detail of our meeting, and told them of what use I could be. Two pairs of eyes regarded him silently; one of the old women craned her dirty neck, the other, having listened to the end, said to me:

"Sit down; I'll get you some supper."

The little yard was overgrown with plantains and other weeds; in the middle stood a black cart without wheels. The cattle were being driven home, and from the farm-yard there floated a stream of subdued sounds; from every corner of the yard grey shadows crept over the grass.

"We must all die some day," Yufim remarked with quiet conviction, knocking out his pipe against the wall. The barefooted, rosy-cheeked woman stood by the door and asked in a lowered voice:

"Are you coming or aren't you?"

"I must finish this business first, then. . . ."

I was given a hunk of bread and a basin of milk. The dog rose, and, resting her old dribbling jaw on my knees, looked into my face with lustreless eyes as though asking:

"Is it nice?"

The hump-backed old woman's voice was heard in the yard, mingling with the evening breeze that stirred the dry grass.

"You beg and pray for God to save you from sorrow, and it falls on you twice as heavily. . . ."

Dark as Fate, she craned her long neck, and rocking herself with

a measured motion she fell slowly to the ground at my feet, murmuring monotonous rambling phrases :

"There are some who work when they like, or not at all when they don't choose to ; but our people work till they have no strength left, yet they get no reward. . . ."

The old woman's soft mutterings were heard in the yard :

"The Mother of God rewards every one. . . . She rewards all. . . ."

A moment's deep silence.

Deep and weighty it seemed, pregnant with meaning ; it seemed to augur the birth of great thoughts and momentous words.

"I must tell you," the old woman said, trying to straighten her back, "that among many enemies my old man had one friend. Andrey was his name. When we could no longer live at my grandfather's down by the Doritsa, and people began to worry and abuse him until he couldn't say a word and the tears came to his eyes, Andrey came to him and said : 'Hadn't you better go away, Yakov ? You have hands, the earth is big ; a man can live anywhere. If people are spiteful here it is because they are herded together and stupid ; don't judge them, but live simply ; let them go about their business and you about yours ; let them live according to their lights and you according to yours. Live quietly and submit to none ; then you will conquer all.' Thus my Vassil used to affirm often : 'They are they . . . and we are we !' A good word, you know, never dies—wherever it is born it flies over the whole world like a lark."

"That is true," Yufim affirmed. "That is quite right. As we say, 'A good word is Christ's and a bad one the priest's.'"

The old woman lifted her head sharply, and cried out :

"Not the priest's, but yours. . . . Yufim, Yufim, your hair is already grey, and still you say things without thinking. . . ."

At this moment Yufim's wife appeared, waving her arms and scattering abuse :

"My God ! what a man ! He doesn't answer, doesn't listen, only stands there barking at the moon like the dog."

"Oh dear !" Yufim drawled. "There she goes. . . ."

In the west the clouds began to rise, like blue smoke and fire ; it seemed as though the whole steppes would instantly burst into flame. In the east it was already dark and the black sultry night was creeping up.

The warm odour of the dead man issued from the window of the hut just over my head. The dog's nostrils and grey ears trembled, the eyes, blinking pitifully, looked towards the window. Yufim, looking up at the sky, seemed to assure himself :

"It will not rain ; no——"

"Have you a psalter?" I asked.

"What?"

"A book, a psalter?"

All were silent.

Faster advanced the southern night, sweeping the light from the earth as though it were dust. How pleasant to sleep in the fragrant hay till sunrise!

"Perhaps Panka has one," Yufim said confusedly. "With his little ones. . . ." Whispering, they went into the hut, and the little round old woman said to me with a sigh

"Go in and look at him if you want to."

Her dear little head was bent humbly. Folding her arms across her breast she whispered:

"Most Holy Mother. . . . Most pure. . . ."

The dead man looked stern and important. His thick grey beard was parted in a deep crease down the centre, his nose was buried in his thick moustache, his protruding eyes were half open, so was his mouth. It seemed as though he were thinking deeply; that angry thoughts occupied him; that at any moment he would utter some last significant sentence. Over his head burnt a taper whose blue smoke flickered nervously; it cast but a faint light, and only enhanced the hollows under the eyes and the deep wrinkles in the cheeks of the dead man. On the grey shirt, like two mounds, lay his dark bony hands, the fingers clenched even in death. A current of air blew in from the window to the door, bringing with it an unpleasant odour of rank grass and of decay. More ardent and clearer came the old woman's murmur as she sobbed dryly; through the small square of sky seen through the window the afterglow loomed threateningly, and when the bluish evening light streamed through the window into that room, cramped as a coffin, the yellow candle-light seemed to fly away, the grey hair on the corpse sparkled like fish scales, and the face seemed to frown austere. The old woman's murmur was deeper; cold was her heart, and without soothing her affliction the old words rose bitterly to her mind:

"Do not mourn for me, mother, seeing me in the coffin. I will arise when . . ."

He would not arise.

The thin old woman came in and announced that there was no psalter on the farmstead, but there was another book if that would do.

The other book turned out to be a grammar of Church Slavonic. The first few pages were missing, and it began with the words:

"Friend, Friends, of the Friend. . . ."

"What are we to do?" the poor little old woman asked sadly when I told her that the grammar was of no use to the old man; her

childish little face trembled and her swollen eyes again filled with tears.

"A man lives on and on," she said, sobbing, "and in the end does not earn for himself a decent burial."

I told her that I would read all the prayers and psalms I knew, over her husband, only she must go out of the hut. I was not used to this kind of work and could not remember all the prayers if any one were listening. She either did not understand or did not believe me, for she stood for a long time by the door, sniffing, and wiping her worn face with her sleeves. After a time she went out.

The afterglow shone in the black sky down to the horizon where the steppes met the sea; a blue mist pervaded the hut, silently bringing with it the sultry darkness of the night; the candle glimmered timidly. The man lay and with half-shut eyes looked out on the flickering shades running over his chest, the white walls, and the ceiling. I looked carefully at him out of the corner of my eye (one could not tell what a dead man might do) and conscientiously intoned in a soft voice:

"Forgive us our sins though we be worse than beasts. . . ."

But at the same time came thoughts denying them:

"It is not sin that is difficult and bitter, but truth; our conscious and unconscious sins; those due to youth and bad teaching; those due to wantonness and despair. . . ."

"This hardly applies to you, brother," I reflected.

Blue stars twinkled in the fathomless darkness of the heavens—who besides myself was watching them at that hour?

From the distance came a sound of thunder and everything trembled in the afterglow.

Pit-pat, pit-pat went the dog on the clay floor; it kept walking to and fro, sniffing my legs, growling softly and then going out again. It was probably too old to mourn for its master with despairing howls as dogs are wont to do. When it went out, the shadows seemed to follow it; they flowed out at the door and fanned my face with a cold breeze. The candle-light seemed to wish to tear itself from the candle and fly away to the stars as small and pitiful as itself. I did not want it to vanish, and followed its flicker with such intensity that my eyes ached. It was painfully stuffy in the hut. I stood at the dead man's head, immovable, listening intently to the silence. . . . A desire for sleep, difficult to overcome, possessed me. With a great effort I recalled the beautiful hymns by Makari, by the great Zeatoust, by Damaskin, and in my head, buzzing like flies, were the words of the Sixth Rule to those about to fall asleep:

"If you find a soft pillow leave it, and put a stone there for Christ's sake. If you would sleep in the winter . . ."

In order to keep awake I hummed a hymn of praise :

" My Lord, save my soul which is weakened in all terrible sins. . . . "

Behind the door I heard the dry faint murmur :

" Merciful Mother of God . . . take my soul. . . . "

Her soul seemed to me as grey as a dove and just as timid. When it should fly to the throne of the Mother of God and She stretched out Her soft white hand, this little soul would start, flutter its little wings and, with a fearful joy, would die.

Then the Mother of God would say to Her Son :

" See how terrified Your people are upon the earth. They are unaccustomed to joy. Is this well, my Son ? "

And He would reply :

" I do not know. "

In His place I would have been confused.

Through the deep stillness an answer seemed to come, also in song. The stillness was so intense that the distant sound sinking in it seemed unnatural, a fantastic echo of my own voice. I ceased and listened. The sound was nearer and clearer ; some one, with heavy dragging feet, was approaching and murmuring :

" N-no. . . . It will not rain. . . . "

" Why are the dogs not barking ? " I thought, wiping my eyes.

It seemed to me that the dead man's brow twitched and that a solemn smile trembled on his lips.

Outside, I heard a heavy voice :

" What ? Ah, old woman . . . I knew that he would die. Well, be silent ! Men like him always stand up until the last hour and then lie down never to rise. . . . Who ? . . . A stranger ? . . . Ah. . . . "

Something large and formless, like the darkness itself, knocked against the door and lurched into the hut, filling it to the very ceiling. With a broad wave of his arms this man crossed himself in the candlelight, stumbled forward, and, almost touching the feet of the corpse with his forehead, said softly :

" Well, Vassil ? " and then burst out into sobs.

There was a strong smell of vodka. The old woman stood in the door begging him :

" Father Demid, give him the book. . . . "

" Why should I ? I'll read myself ! "

His heavy hand lay on my shoulder; his large hairy face bent towards mine.

" You are young yet. Are you in the Church ? "

His head was enormous, like a cask, and his long thick hair shone like gold even in the flickering candle-light. He reeled and shook me to and fro ; he emitted a strong smell of vodka.

"Father Demid," the old woman said tearfully and obstinately. He interrupted her threateningly.

"How many times have I told you that a deacon is not addressed as 'father'? Go away. Go to bed. This is my business. Go away. . . . Light another candle, I can't see anything."

Sitting down on the bench and putting the book on his knees he asked :

"Will you have a drink?"

"There's nothing here."

"What's that?" he said severely. "Well, I've a bottle here, see?"

"It is not fitting to drink here."

"That is true," he muttered pensively. "I must go out. . . . That is true."

"What are you going to do, sit down and read?"

"I? I don't want to read. You read. I don't feel myself—'My enemies have crushed me as though many fought me from on high,' and into the bargain I am somewhat drunk."

He threw the book at me and shook his head heavily :

"People die off and the earth is still overcrowded . . . people die without seeing any good. . . ."

"This is not a psalter," I said, examining the book.

"You lie!"

"Look at it!"

He bent back the cover, and passing the candle over the page read the scarlet letters: "Ocktoich. . . ."

He was surprised.

"The Ocktoich? . . . How does it come here . . . even the sizes are different . . . the psalter is a small fat book, and this . . . it must have been because I hurried so."

The mistake seemed to have sobered him. He got up, went over to the old man and stroking his beard leant over him :

"Forgive me, Vassil . . . what can I do?"

Raising himself, he shook back his thick hair, and taking the bottle from his pocket, put the neck to his lips, and sucked the spirit for a long time, breathing through his nose.

"Do you want some?"

"I'm sleepy. If I drink I shall fall asleep."

"Well, fall asleep, then!"

"And the prayers?"

"What use is it to any one here for you to murmur words that no one understands?"

He sat down on the bench, and bending over, rested his head in his hands and lapsed into silence.

The July night was already melting away; the darkness quietly

receded to the corners. Through the window came a breath of the early morning dewy freshness. The light of the two candles seemed paler; their two flames looked like the frightened eyes of a sick child.

"Had you been alive, Vassil," the deacon muttered, "I should have had a place to go to, but now my best friend is dead, and I have nowhere to go. . . . Lord, where is Thy righteousness. . . ."

I sat by the window, my head in the open, smoking, dozing, listening to the heavy plaint:

"They have consumed my wife and they will devour me as a pig does cabbages. . . . Is it right, Vassil?"

The deacon again pulled out his bottle, sucked at it, wiped his beard, and leaning over the dead man, kissed his forehead:

"Good-bye, my friend. . . ."

He turned to me, and with sudden strength and clearness said:

"He was a simple man, this; didn't stand out from the others; seemed a rook amongst rooks. But he was not a rook, he was a white dove, and no one knew it except I . . . yes . . . 'And now he has departed from the bitter toil of the Pharaohs'—and I am alive—and only my enemies remain."

"Have you had a great sorrow?"

He did not reply at once, and then said earnestly:

"Every one has more sorrow than is necessary . . . and I have so much . . . if you sleep . . . your sorrow follows you into your dreams."

He stumbled and fell against me, saying:

"I want to sing, and I mustn't now. People would wake up and grumble . . . but I would like to sing!"

Softly he hummed in my ear:

To whom shall I tell my sorrows?
To whom of my sorrows sing?
Whose h-h-hand . . .

His stiff beard tickled my neck and I moved away.

"You don't like it? Well, the devil take you! Go to sleep!"

"Your beard tickled me."

"Shall I shave it off for you, my honey?"

He sat down on the floor and was pensive a moment.

"Well, you read; I'll go to sleep; only don't run off with the book, for it belongs to the Church. I've had experience of tramps before! Why do you run all over the place? Why do you tramp about? After all, where are you going? What draws you? Go on your way. Say that a poor deacon here is ruined—tell some person who will pity me. Diomid Kubasov, deacon, that is I . . . beyond salvation. . . ."

He fell asleep. Opening the book at random, I began to read :

"The uncultivated land which has become the nourisher of all, which opens its hand, and by its benevolence feeds all living creatures. . . ."

The "nourisher of all" lay stretched out before me, covered with dry, fragrant grass. Sleepily I looked out upon its dark, enigmatic face, thinking of the man who had walked his furrow so many times, his only care being that the dead should come to life. Strange thoughts rose in my mind. I saw a man stalking over the bare, deserted steppes. He had a thousand hands that held the earth in wide embrace ; in his tracks the dead steppes came to life and bore fruit, villages and towns sprung up, and still he went on, incessantly sowing life—human life. The earth regarded all men kindly ; all the mysterious strength in them was called up to conquer death, eternally transforming the dead into life ; all walked along mortal paths to immortality ; men ate of the seed of death but did not die.

Many thoughts came knocking at my heart ; the beating of their wings produced a joyful sensation ; I wanted to ask many questions of someone who would answer simply, fearlessly, honestly.

Around me, the dead and the sleeping, and in the sheds outside, signs of life ; but it did not matter ! There were many human beings on the world, and sooner or later I would find the long-sought one. . . .

I imagined myself out of the hut, on the open steppes, looking back at it, a mere speck on the earth. The huts were close together, their windows all dark except this one, in which faintly glimmered a captive light over the dead man's head. . . .

That was the heart that had ceased to live. . . . I realised that only an ordinary little man had died, but when I thought of all his work it seemed infinitely big. . . . I remembered the unripe, crushed corn lying in the ruts on the steppes, the larks up in the blue sky over the golden grain, the steppes themselves, stretching over the earth. . . .

I heard a flapping of wings ; the shadow of birds passed over the light grass outside, silver with dew.

The cocks crowed—five of them—the geese awakened, the cows began to low, and somewhere a wattle hedge creaked. I longed to be out on the steppes ; to go to sleep on the warm, dry earth. The deacon was asleep at my feet ; he lay on his back and exposed his broad chest. His fiery hair shone like a halo, his red face was puffed out angrily, his mouth was open, and his moustache moved slightly. His hands were long, and he had fingers like the prongs of a garden fork.

Involuntarily I imagined this man embracing some woman ; her face would be buried in his beard, and she would laugh and throw her

head back as it tickled her. I wondered how many children he had.

It was unpleasant to think that he carried sorrow in his heart where joy should have been.

The old woman's kindly face peeped in at the door, and through the window I caught the first rays of the rising sun.

A light, silky, transparent mist hovered over the river, and the trees had that strange immobility which makes one think they are about to burst into song and tell the understanding soul about the great mysteries of nature.

"Such a good man," the old woman whispered, gazing down sorrowfully at the deacon's big body.

As though reading from a book I could not see, she told me, in simple words, the story of his wife.

She had sinned with a certain man. People got to know of it and told her husband, and when he forgave her, laughed at them. From that day, to hide her shame, she had never left the house—and he had taken to drink. . . . It was two years now . . . and he would probably lose his place soon. The old woman said that her husband never drank and tried to dissuade the deacon from it. "Ah, Demid," he would say, "don't let people get the upper hand of you; live simply; let them go about their business and you about yours. . . ."

The tears fell from her dim little eyes and dissolved in the wrinkles of her swollen cheeks. The little head shook like a faded autumn leaf; it was pitiful to see this kindly face so worn with age and sorrow. I sought in my soul for some word of consolation, but could find none, and felt hurt.

I recalled the words I had read somewhere, a long time since:

"The servants of God should laugh, not weep; weeping is offensive to man and to God."

"I must go on," I said in confusion.

"Ah!"

It was a hasty exclamation as though my words had alarmed her. With trembling hand she tried to find the pocket in her skirt, her lips meanwhile moving silently.

"I don't want money, mistress; give me some bread if you have any. . . ."

"You don't want a copper?" she asked incredulously.

"Of what use would it be to me?"

"As you please," she agreed pensively. "As you please . . . go on your way . . . thank you!"

Before me, in the blue sky, the sun was proudly displaying its rays over the earth like a peacock its tail. I winked at it; I knew it well; in an hour or two its smile would burn like fire, but for the

moment, at any rate, we were pleased with one another. I walked among the corn, singing its praise—the Lord of Life.

Inaccessible Nature
Let me reach thee!
Let me bathe in thee!
Light up my soul!
And lead me on with thee
Beyond all good and evil.

.

We live simply. . . . Let them go about their business and we about ours.

MAXIM GORKY

MAKAR CHUDRA

A COLD, damp wind was blowing from the sea, wafting over the steppe the melancholy melody of the splashing of the waves which struck against the shore, and of the rustling of the bushes close by. From time to time the gusts of wind brought along toward us chilled, shrivelled, yellow leaves and flung them into the pile of burning wood, stirring the flame, from which the surrounding darkness of the autumn night quivered, and retreating shyly, disclosed the vast steppe on the left, the endless sea on the right, and opposite me the massive figure of Makar Chudra, the old gipsy, who was watching the horses of his camp, which had pitched its tents some fifty yards away from us.

Not paying the slightest attention to the cold waves of the wind which threw his coat open, bared his hairy, bronze chest and beat against it mercilessly, he reclined in a fine, free, strong pose, his face turned toward me ; he puffed methodically at his huge pipe, emitted heavy volumes of smoke from his mouth and nose, and fixing his eyes over my head into the dead quiet darkness of the steppe, talked to me without pausing, and without making a single motion to protect himself from the boisterous wind.

"So you are wandering around? That's good! You have chosen a fine lot for yourself, falcon. That's the proper thing to do : wander and look on ; when you have seen enough, lie down and die—that's all !

"Life? . . . Other people? " he went on, after he had listened sceptically to my retort. "Eh! What have you to do with that? Are you not life yourself? Other people live without you, and without you they will go through life. Do you think that you are of any use to anybody? You are neither bread nor a staff, and no one needs you.

"To study and to teach, you say? Can you learn how to make people happy? No, you cannot. First become grey, then say that it is necessary to teach. To teach what? Everybody knows what he needs. Those that are wiser take what there

is, those that are foolish get nothing, and everybody learns for himself.

"They are very queer, your people. They have huddled themselves together in crowds and crush one another, and yet see how much room there is on earth." He pointed toward the steppe. "And they're for ever working. What for? For whom? No one knows. You see a man ploughing, and you think: here he will by degrees waste away his strength tilling the soil in the sweat of his brow, and then he will lie down and die in it and decay. Nothing will remain after him, he will see nothing of his field, and he will die, as he was born, a fool.

"Was he born but to dig the earth a little, and then to die before he had time to dig a grave for himself? Does he know freedom? Does he understand the vast expanse of the steppe? Does the whispering of the waves of the sea gladden his heart? Eh? He's a slave all life long—that's all there is to it!

"Look at me! At fifty-eight I have seen so much that if you were to write it out on paper you could not get it into a thousand bags like the one you have there. Well, tell me, where have I not been? You can't. You have never even heard of some of the places I have seen. That's the way to live: wander, wander—and that's all. Don't stay on in one place too long—what's there in it? Just as day and night are for ever chasing each other around the earth, so you should run from thoughts about life, in order not to cease loving it. For when you muse over it, you'll cease loving life. It is always the case. That's the way it was with me. Eh! That's the way it was, falcon.

"I was in prison in Galichin. 'Why do I live on earth?' I somehow thought to myself for weariness—it's so tedious in prison, falcon. Eh, how tedious! And my heart was seized with anguish when I looked out of the window toward the field—it was clutched as with smith-tongs. Who can say wherefore he lives? No one, falcon! It is not necessary to question yourself about it. Live, and that's all there is to it. Go around and look on about you, then sadness will never seize upon you. . . ."

He spat into the bonfire and fell silent, again filling his pipe. The wind howled plaintively and softly, the horses were neighing in the dark, and a tender, passionate song came soaring from the camp. The beautiful Nonka, Makar's daughter, was singing. I knew her voice, which was of a deep, throaty timbre, and always rang with queer discontent and pretension, whether she sang a song or asked after your health. The haughtiness of a queen was fixed on her swarthy, dull face, and in her eyes flashed a consciousness of fascination and of the irresistibility of her beauty, and her abhorrence of everything that was not herself.

Makar handed me the pipe. "Smoke! Does the girl sing well? I should say she does! Would you want such a girl to fall in love with you? No? Good! That's right; don't trust them, and keep at a distance from them. Kissing is more pleasant to a girl than smoking a pipe is to me; but when you have kissed her, your freedom is dead in your heart. She will tie you to herself with certain cords which are invisible and which cannot be torn, and you will give up to her all your soul, and only the rest will remain for you. It's true! Beware of the girls! They lie, the reptiles. 'I love you,' she says, 'better than anything in the world'; but try to stick her with a pin, and she'll tear your heart. I know it. Eh, how well I know it! Well, falcon, if you wish I'll tell you a true story. You had better remember it, and if you do remember it you'll be a free bird all your life long. . . .

"There was once a young gipsy, Zobar by name—Loiko Zobar. All Hungary and Bohemia and Slavonia and all around the sea knew him—he was a fine, brave fellow! There was not a village around that neighbourhood where some one did not take a vow to kill Loiko; but he lived, and when Zobar took a liking to a certain horse he was sure to caracole on it, even if a whole regiment were to guard it. Ah! Was there any one he was afraid of? Even if Satan came to him with his entire suite Zobar would surely pick a quarrel with him, and if he could not strike him with a knife, he would have kicked each and every one of the devils—that's certain!

"And all the gipsy camps knew him or heard of him. He loved nothing but horses, and even these he did not love long. He would ride a horse a little, and then he would sell it; and as for the money—whichever wanted it could have it. Nothing was sacred to him; if you needed his heart he himself would have torn it out of his chest and would have given it to you, just to help you. That's the kind of man he was, falcon!

"Our camp was wandering at that time over Bukovina—that was some ten years ago. Once—it was a night in spring, I remember—we were sitting, I, and soldier Danila, who fought together with Kossuth, and old Nur, and Radda, the daughter of Danila, and the rest of us.

"Do you know my Nonka? She's a queen-girl! Well, and yet you can't compare Radda with her—it would be too much honour for Nonka! You can't describe Radda in words. Perhaps her beauty could be played on a violin, but only by one who knows the violin as his own soul.

gold ; on his side a sword flashed like lightning. Whenever the horse stamped his foot the old nobleman's sword, set with precious stones, and the blue velvet of his cap, looked like a bit of the sky. He was a man of importance ! He stared and stared, then he said to Radda :

" ' Here, kiss me ; I'll give you a bagful of money.'

" And she turned aside, that's all.

" ' Forgive me if I insulted you ; grant me at least a gentler glance.' The old fellow at once lowered his crest, and flung the wallet filled with money at her feet—it was a big wallet, dear ! She pushed it with her foot into the mud, and that's all !

" ' Eh, what a fine girl ! ' he sighed, and whipped the horse ; only a cloud of dust remained.

" On the next day he came again. ' Who's her father ? ' he thundered over the camp. Danila came out. ' Sell me your daughter ; take as much as you want ! '

" And Danila said to him : ' Only you noblemen sell everything, from your hogs to your conscience. But I fought along with Kossuth, and I don't deal in anything ! '

" The old baron roared and grasped his sword, but one of us put a burning cinder into the horse's ear, and the horse carried him away. We started off at once. We wandered one day and another—but he caught us.

" ' Hey, you,' he said, ' my conscience is clear before God and before you. Give me the girl in marriage. I'll share everything with you—I am very rich ! '

" He was burning, and, like feather-grass tossed by the wind, he was shaking in his saddle. We grew thoughtful.

" ' Well, my daughter, speak,' said Danila, under his breath.

" ' If an eaglet were to go to a raven's nest of her own will, what would become of her ? ' Radda asked us.

" Danila laughed, and we all laughed with him. ' Good, my daughter ! Did you hear, sir ? The thing doesn't work ! Look for doves ; they're more yielding.' And off he went.

" And the old magnate seized his cap, threw it to the ground and darted away ; he galloped so that the earth began to tremble. Such was Radda, falcon.

" Yes ! So one night we were sitting and listening to music which was soaring over the steppe ; beautiful music it was ! It made the blood warmer in the veins and it lured us somewhere. We felt that this music made us wish for something, after which it would be no longer necessary to live, and if to live, then as kings of the whole world ; that's the kind of music it was, falcon.

" And the music came nearer and nearer. Soon we discerned a horse in the darkness, and on it sat a man playing as he advanced

toward us. He paused at the wood-pile, stopped playing and looked at us with a smile.

" ' Eh, Zobar, you ! ' exclaimed Danila joyously. ' So that was Loiko Zobar ! ' "

" His moustaches reached to his shoulders and mingled with his locks ; his eyes were burning like bright stars, and his smile was like the sun, by God ! He looked as if he had been cast of one block of iron together with his horse. He stood there in blood-colour, in the flame of the wood-pile, laughing, his teeth flashing. Eh, may I be accursed if I did not love him already as I loved myself, before he even said a word to me or noticed that I, too, lived in the white world !

" You see, falcon, what kind of people there are in the world ! He'll look into your eyes and make your soul a prisoner, and you're not a bit ashamed of it—you even feel proud of it. With such a man you at once become better yourself. There are few such people, my friend ! And it is better that there are but few of them. If there were much good in the world it would not have been considered as good at all. That's the way it is ! But listen :

" Radda said to him : ' You play well, Loiko. Who made you such a well-sounding, delicate violin ? ' "

" He began to laugh. ' I made it myself, and the strings I twisted out of the heart of a young girl I loved dearly. The violin is still a little false, but I can manage the bow well ! You see ? ' "

" Of course, a young fellow will try at once to begot a girl's eyes, so that they should not consume his heart, while he himself is seized with longing for her. Thus it was also with Loiko. But he didn't strike the right girl.

" Radda turned aside and said, yawning : ' And people told me that Zobar was wise and clever. That's the way they lie.' And she went away.

" ' Eh, beautiful girl, your teeth are sharp ! ' Loiko flashed his eyes and dismounted his horse. ' Good-evening, brethren ! I have come to you ! ' "

" ' We welcome our guest, O eagle ! ' said Danila in reply to him.

" We lived for some time in the same place ; things went well, and Zobar stayed with us. He was a comrade ! And he was wise, like an old man ; he knew everything. He knew how to read and write Russian and Hungarian. Sometimes he would start to talk—I would give up sleeping for an age, and rather listen to him. And then he played ; may the lightning strike me if any one in the world ever played as Zobar ! He would whisk the bow over the strings—and your heart would begin to quiver ; he would run the bow over the strings once more—and your heart would become petrified listening, while he played and smiled. One felt like crying and laughing at

the same time, listening to his songs. Now some one was moaning bitterly from under his bow, moaning, begging for help, and cutting your heart as with a knife. Now the steppe was telling fairy tales to the skies—sweet, sad fairy tales. Now a girl was crying, escorting her departing lover. Now the lover called the girl for a rendezvous in the steppe. And suddenly—hey!—a gay, free melody would resound like the crash of thunder, and it seemed as if the sun itself would soon dance to the tune of that melody.

“Every vein of your body understood that melody, and you yourself became its slave. And if Loiko would cry out at that time, ‘To knives, comrades!’ we would all draw our knives and go against anybody he would point out. He could do everything with a man, and everybody loved him, loved him intensely. Only Radda did not look at him, and she even mocked him. She stung Zobar to the quick! Loiko gnashed his teeth, tugged at his moustaches; his eyes were darker than the abyss, and sometimes something flashed in them which made one fear for one’s soul. Loiko would go far away at night into the steppe and until morning his violin would weep there, burying his freedom. We lay and listened, thinking of what was to be done. We knew that when two rocks are rolling against each other we must not stand between them—they’ll crush us.

“Once we all gathered and discussed matters. It became tedious. Danila asked Loiko:

“‘Sing a song, Zobar; cheer up our souls!’

“Zobar glanced at Radda, who lay a little distance away from him, gazing at the sky, and then he started. The violin began to speak as if it was really a maiden’s heart! Loiko sang:

“Hey-hop! In my heart a fire is burning, and the steppe is vast,
Like the wind, my steed is swift, and my hand is firm.

‘Radda turned her head, and, raising herself a little, smiled to the singer. He flushed like the dawn of day.

“Hey, Hey-hop! Come, my comrade! Shall we gallop away?
The steppe is clothed in stern gloom, and yonder the break of day awaits us!
Hey-hop! Let’s fly to meet the day.
Rise upward, but let your mane not touch the beautiful moon!

“How he sang! No one ever like that now! But Radda said, as though filtering water:

“‘You had better not fly so high, Loiko, for you may fall down. Look out, you may fall with your nose into a ditch, and you’ll dirty your moustache.’

"Loiko glanced at her like a beast, but said nothing—the brave fellow restrained himself and sang on :

"Hey-hop! Soon the day will come, and we are still asleep.
Ey, Hey! Then you and I will be consumed by the fire of shame!

" 'That's a song for you!' said Danila. 'I have never before heard such a song; may Satan make of me a pipe for himself if I lie!'

"Old Nur twitched his moustaches and shrugged his shoulders, and we were all delighted by Zobar's fine song. Only Radda did not like it.

" 'A mosquito buzzed like this one day, mimicking the cry of an eagle,' she said, as if throwing snow on us.

" 'Perhaps you want the knout, Radda?' Danila stretched himself toward her, and Zobar, as black as the earth, flung his cap to the ground and said :

" 'Hold on, Danila! A wild horse needs a steel bridle! Give me your daughter for a wife!'

"Danila smiled. 'Take her,' he said, 'if you wish and if you can!'

" 'Very well,' said Loiko, and turned to Radda. 'Well, girl, listen to me awhile, and don't be haughty! I have seen many girls—ch, many! But not one of them touched my heart as you have done. Eh, Radda, you have made a prisoner of my soul! But what of it? What is to be, will be—and—eh, there isn't a horse on which one can run away from himself! I take you as my wife before God, before my honour, before your father and all these people. But look out; my freedom is not to be thwarted. I shall continue to be a free man, and to live as I please.' And he came up to her, his teeth firmly set, his eyes flashing. We saw how he outstretched his hand to her. Now, we thought, Radda has put the bridle to the horse of the steppe. Suddenly we saw that Zobar threw up his hands, and struck the ground with the back of his head——

" 'What had happened? It was as though a bullet had hit the brave fellow's heart. Radda has lashed his feet with a huge leather knout and then tugged it to herself; that is why Loiko fell.

"And soon again the girl lay on the ground, motionless, silent, smiling. We were waiting to see what would happen. Loiko sat on the ground, clasping his head with his hands, as though fearing lest it should burst. Then he got up quietly and went away into the steppe, not looking at any one. Nur whispered to me, 'Watch him!' and I crept after Zobar into the steppe in the darkness of the night. That's the way it was, falcon! "

Makar threw out the ashes from his pipe and began to refill again. I muffled my top-coat more tightly about me and, lying, looked at his old, black, sunburnt, weather-beaten face. He shook his head sternly and muttered something under his breath ; his thick grey moustaches were stirring, and the wind waved his hair. He looked like an old oak which had been struck by lightning, but which was still mighty, and proud of its might. The sea kept whispering to the shore as before, and the wind wafted this whisper over the steppe. Nonka had stopped singing, and the clouds which had overcast the sky made the autumn night still darker and more terrible.

"Loiko walked step by step," went on Makar, "his head hung, his arms dangling like whips, and when he came down to the valley, near the brook, he seated himself on a rock and heaved a sigh. He sighed so that my heart began to bleed for pity, but I did not go over to him. You can't help one in misery with a word ; isn't it so ? He sat an hour, another and a third, without stirring from his place.

"And I lay a little distance away. The night was light, the moon covered the entire steppe with silver, and one could see far away.

"Suddenly I noticed Radda coming hastily from the camp. I began to feel cheerful—eh, how cheerful ! 'Radda's a fine, brave girl,' I thought. She walked over to him, but he did not notice her. She put her hand on his shoulder ; Loiko shuddered and raised his head. Then he jumped up and clutched his knife ! 'Oh, he'll kill the girl !' I thought, and was about to call to the camp, and run to them, when I heard Radda's voice :

"'Drop that ! I'll break your head !' Radda held a pistol in her hand and she aimed straight at Zobar's forehead. That was a Satan of a girl ! 'Well,' thought I, 'they're now equal in strength ; what will happen now ?'

"'Listen !' Radda thrust the pistol into her belt and said to Zobar : 'I have come not to kill you, but to make peace with you. Drop that knife !'

"He dropped it and looked into her eyes morosely. It was terrible, my friend ! Two human beings stood and faced each other like beasts, and both were so good and brave. Only the bright moon looked down on them, and I—that's all !

"'Well, listen to me, Loiko ; I love you !' said Radda. He merely shrugged his shoulders, as though he was bound hand and foot. 'I have seen brave fellows, but you are braver and handsomer in soul and face than all. Each and every one of them would have shaved off his moustaches if I were but to give a single wink to him ; they would all fall at my feet if I only wished it. But what's

the use? They're not too brave as it is, and I would have made women of them altogether. There are but few brave gipsies left in the world—very few, Loiko. I have never loved any one, Loiko, but I love you. And then I love freedom! I love freedom, Loiko, more than I love you. And I cannot live without you, just as you cannot live without me. Therefore I want you to be mine—soul and body—do you hear?"

"Zobar smiled. 'I hear! It cheers my heart to hear your words! Go ahead, speak on!'

"'And there's another thing, Loiko: no matter how you turn about, you'll be mine. Therefore don't waste any time in vain; my kisses and caresses are awaiting you. I will kiss you passionately, Loiko! Under my kiss you will forget your valiant life, and your gay songs which delight the brave gipsies will no longer resound over the steppe. You will sing tender songs of love to me, your Radda. Don't waste your time in vain. I have said it; that means that to-morrow you will yield to me as to an older comrade. You will bow to my feet before the whole camp, and you will kiss my hand—and then I will be your wife!'

"That's what the devilish girl wanted! Such a thing was unheard of in our days. Only long ago there was such a custom in Montenegro, but among gipsies—never! Fraternity with a girl! Well, falcon, try to invent something more ridiculous than that! You'll break your head for a year, and you will not invent it!

"Loiko jumped aside and shouted over the whole steppe, like one wounded in the chest. Radda shuddered, but she did not betray herself.

"'Well, then, good-bye till to-morrow, and to-morrow you'll do as I bid you. Do you hear, Loiko?'

"'I hear! I'll do it!' moaned Zobar, and outstretched his hands to her. She did not even look at him, and he staggered, like a tree broken by the wind, and fell to the ground, sobbing and laughing.

"That's how the accursed Radda harassed the brave fellow. It was with difficulty that I brought him to himself.

"Eh, who needs that people should be afflicted with misery? Who is it that loves to hear how a human heart, rent by grief, is moaning? There, think about it!

"I returned to the camp and told everything to the old people. They thought it over and decided to wait, to see what the result would be. And this is what happened. When we all gathered around the wood-pile next evening, Loiko also came. He was agitated, and he had become terribly thin overnight; his eyes were sunk; he lowered them to the ground, and without lifting them, said:

“ ‘It’s this way, comrades : I looked into my heart last night and I did not find in it the place of my old free life. Radda alone lives there. Here the beautiful Radda is smiling like a queen ! She loves freedom better than she loves me, while I love her better than I love my freedom, and I decided to bow to Radda, as she bade me, so that every one shall see how her beauty conquered the brave Loiko Zobar. And then she will become my wife and will caress me and kiss me, so that I shall not feel like singing any songs for you any longer, and I’ll not feel sorry for my freedom. Isn’t it so, Radda ? ’ He lifted his eyes and looked at her.

“ She nodded silently and sternly, and pointed at her feet with her hand. And we looked on and understood nothing. We even felt like going away, if only not to see how Loiko Zobar would kneel before a girl—even if that girl was Radda. We felt ashamed, we felt sorry and sad.

“ ‘Well ! ’ cried Radda to Zobar.

“ ‘Eh ! Don’t be in a hurry, you’ll have time, you’ll grow tired of it yet,’ he laughed. And his laughter was like the sound of steel. ‘So here’s the whole affair, comrades ! What remains to be done ? It remains for me to find out whether my Radda’s heart is really as strong as she has shown it to me. I’ll try, then—forgive me, brethren ! ’

“ ‘Eh ! We had not time yet to conjecture what Zobar was about to do, and Radda lay already on the ground, and Zobar’s crooked knife stuck in her breast up to the very handle. We were dumb-founded.

“ Radda drew out the knife, threw it aside, and stopping up the wound with a tuft of her black hair, she said with a smile, in a loud clear voice : ‘Good-bye, Loiko ! I knew that you would do it ! And I died——’

“ ‘Do you understand the girl, falcon ? That’s the kind of a devilish girl she was, may I be accursed for ever and ever if it isn’t so ! Eh !

“ ‘Eh, I will make a low bow to you, proud queen ! ’ cried Loiko over the whole steppe, and throwing himself to the ground, he pressed his lips to the feet of the dead Radda and lay as petrified. We bared our heads and stood in silence.

“ ‘What can you say in a case like this, falcon ? Nur was about to say, ‘We must bind him ! ’ But our hands would not move to bind Loiko Zobar, and Nur knew it. So he waved his hand, and stepped aside. And Danila picked up the knife which Radda had thrown aside, and he looked at it for a long time, stirring his grey moustaches. Radda’s blood had not yet dried up on the crooked, sharp knife.

"Danila walked over to Zobar and stuck the knife into his spine right opposite the heart.

" 'That's the way !' said Loiko, turning to Danila, and he went off to overtake Radda.

"We looked on. Radda lay, pressing with her hand the lock of her black hair to her heart, and her open eyes were fixed on the blue sky, and near her feet lay the outstretched form of the brave Loiko Zobar. His locks fell on his face and covered it.

"We stood absorbed in thought. Danila's grey moustaches were quivering, his heavy eyebrows knitted. He looked at the sky in silence, and old Nur, white as snow, laid himself down on the ground, face downward, and began to sob so that his old shoulders twitched up and down.

"There was something to cry about, falcon !

"You are wandering ? Well, then, go your way ; don't turn aside. Go straight. Maybe that you will pine away in vain. That's all, falcon !"

Makar became silent and, hiding his pipe in his tobacco-pouch, he covered his breast with his coat. It was drizzling : the wind became stronger, and the sea grumbled dully and angrily. One by one the horses came over to the dying flame of the wood-pile, and staring at us with large, intelligent eyes, stopped, motionless, surrounding us in a close ring.

"Hop, hop ! ehoy !" Makar shouted to them gently, and clapping his favourite black horse on the neck, said, turning to me : "It's time to go to sleep !"

And he covered himself with his coat over the head, and outstretching himself on the ground, fell silent. I did not feel like sleeping. I looked into the darkness of the steppe toward the sea, and in the air before my eyes soared the majestically beautiful figure of Radda. Her hand pressed a lock of black hair to the wound in her breast, and through her thin, swarthy fingers blood was trickling drop by drop, falling to the ground in fiery red stars. And behind her, at her feet, soared the brave Loiko Zobar ; his face was covered with heavy black locks, and from under them cold, large tear-drops were dripping. . . .

The rain was increasing, and the sea was singing a gloomy and solemn hymn to the pair of beautiful gipsies—Loiko Zobar and Radda, the daughter of old soldier Danila.

And they both whirled about silently and easily in the darkness of the night, and the beautiful singer Loiko could not overtake the proud Radda.

MAXIM GORKY

IN THE STEPPES

WE left Perekop behind us in the very worst of moods—hungry as wolves and angry with the whole world. During the space of twelve hours we had been deliberately plying all our strength and resources to steal something or earn a little money, but when we were at last convinced that neither the one nor the other was possible we decided to move on farther. Where? Farther at all events. It was a unanimous decision, and we communicated it to each other in words. In every respect we were ready to continue on the path of life along which we had trodden so long. This, too, each decided for himself, and though no word was uttered it could yet be seen plainly in the solemn glances of our hungry eyes.

There were three of us ; we had not known each other long ; we had all met at Herson, in a tavern on the banks of the Dnieper.

One of us had been a soldier of a railway battalion and later a superintendent on a piece of railway in Poland. He was a red-haired, muscular man with cold grey eyes ; he could speak German, and had an intimate knowledge of prison life.

A man of our stamp rarely likes to talk about his past life, always having a more or less well-grounded reason for not doing so ; thus it was that we all believed each other—at any rate, outwardly we believed each other, while inwardly each man believed but poorly in himself.

When our second companion, a dry little man with thin lips always pressed sceptically together, spoke of himself and said that he had once been a student of a Moscow University, we took it as a fact. In reality it mattered little to us whether he had been a student or a spy or a thief, the only thing that counted was that during our acquaintanceship he was our equal. He suffered hunger as we did, was under strict police surveillance in the town and under suspicion with the peasants in the country, and hated the one and the other with the hatred of a defenceless, hunted, hungry animal, dreamt of universal revenge against all,—in a word, by

his mood and his position among the kings of nature and the lords of life, we were birds of a feather.

Misfortune is the very strongest cement for binding people together even of the most opposite natures, and we were all convinced that we had a right to consider ourselves unfortunate.

The third was myself. From a sense of modesty inherent in me from earliest infancy I will not say a word about my virtues, and not wishing to appear naïve I will be likewise silent about my vices. But just to give a general idea of my character I will merely say that I always considered myself better than other men, and will go on thinking so to the end of my days.

And so, we left Perekop and walked on farther, having as our aim that day the shepherds of the steppes, from whom one can always beg a piece of bread and who rarely refuse it to a passing stranger.

The soldier and I walked abreast, the "student" following behind us. On his shoulders was a kind of pea-jacket, on his pointed, angular head, closely shaven, were the remains of a broad-brimmed hat; grey trousers, covered with many-coloured patches, encircled his legs; on the soles of his feet was a gear he called sandals, made out of an old boot-leg, picked up in the road, and the lining of his coat torn into strips. His small greenish eyes flashed as he walked on in silence, raising the dust behind him. The soldier had on a red fustian shirt, which he had "acquired with his own hands in Herson," according to his own words; besides this shirt he wore a warm waistcoat lined with wadding; on his head was a military cap of an uncertain hue, put on according to the military rule, "the crown tilted a little to the right brow"; coarse baggy trousers were on his legs, and he was barefooted.

I, too, was barefooted.

And around us as we walked, on all sides, in a broad sweep, stretched the steppe beneath the blue sultry dome of the cloudless summer sky, looking like a huge, round, black platter. The dusty road that burnt our feet cut across it like a broad band. In places the stubbly strip of cut corn bore a close resemblance to the soldier's long unshaven cheeks.

The soldier walked, singing in a hoarse bass:

... and praised be Thy holy Sabbath...

During his service in the army it had fallen to his lot to be a kind of chanter in the battalion chapel, and consequently he knew many troparions and hymns, which he misused on every occasion when our conversation happened to lag.

The soft purple and rosy outlines of some forms became discernible in the distance on the horizon.

"I suppose it's the Crimean mountains," the "student" said in a dry voice.

"Mountains!" exclaimed the soldier. "It's soon, too soon, my friend, for you to see mountains. It's a cloud . . . only a cloud. Don't you see? It looks just like huckleberry kissel and milk."

I remarked that it would certainly be pleasant if the cloud were really composed of kissel. This instantly made us think of our hunger and brought back the bitterness of our days.

"Ah, the devil!" cursed the soldier, spitting on the ground; "if we could only meet some one! Not a living soul! . . . We shall have to suck our own paws like the bears in the winter."

"I told you we should have to try a peopled part," the "student" announced instructively.

"You told us! Of what use is your learning if you cannot talk? What peopled parts are there here? The devil knows where they are!"

The "student" was silent, biting his lips. The sun had set, and the cloud on the horizon was one mass of indescribable colour. There was a salt, earthy smell. And this dry, pleasant smell increased our appetites the more.

There was a gnawing in the pit of the stomach, a strange, disagreeable sensation that seemed to draw the strength out of every muscle in the body, making it lose its suppleness. A stinging, acrid taste was in the mouth, the throat was parched, the head swam, and dark spots danced in front of the eyes. Sometimes these spots took the form of steaming lumps of meat or chunks of bread, and the memory gave these "visions of the past, visions mute," each its particular smell, and then it seemed as though a knife had been thrust into the stomach.

We walked on, however, describing our sensations to each other, straining our eyes for the sight of a sheep trail and our ears for the sound of a Tartar's cart carrying fruit to the Armiansky market.

But the steppes were silent and deserted.

The day before this unfortunate day the three between us had eaten four pounds of rye bread and five water-melons, on which we had walked forty miles ("the expenditure in excess of the income"), and going to sleep in the market square of Perekop we were awakened by violent pangs of hunger.

The "student" was right when he advised us not to sleep, but to take advantage of the night and go about our business. . . . In decent society, however, it is not permissible to discuss schemes

for the violation of private property, so I will be silent on this point. I merely want to be just and not coarse for the sake of my own interests. I know that people are becoming more tender of heart in these highly cultured days, and that even when taking a man by the throat with the object of strangling him, it is done with all possible politeness and due observation of all the proprieties fitting to the occasion. The experience of my own throat makes me observant of this moral progress, and with a pleasant feeling of confidence I maintain that everything evolves and perfects itself in this world. In particular this remarkable progress is largely visible in the yearly growth of prisons, taverns, and thieves' dens.

And thus, swallowing our saliva and by friendly conversation trying to ignore the pain in our stomachs, we walked along the silent, deserted steppes, beneath the red rays of the setting sun, vaguely hoping for something to turn up. In front of us was the setting sun, sinking gently into the soft cloud, ablaze with its rays, and behind us a blue mist was rising from the steppes to the sky, narrowing the unfriendly horizon.

"Collect everything you can for a camp-fire, mates," the soldier said, picking up a small log from the road; "grass and twigs and everything! We've got to spend the night in the steppes . . . and there'll be a dew."

We separated on all sides, and began collecting dry grass and everything we could lay our hands on that would burn. With every bending movement towards the ground, a passionate desire took possession of the whole body to cast oneself down and lie immobile and eat of the black, abundant earth,—eat and eat until one could eat no more, then close one's eyes and sleep. It mattered not if it meant sleep for ever, so long as one could chew, and feel the thick, warm mess in the mouth slowly descending down the parched throat into the greedy, gnawing stomach, burning with a desire for food.

"If we could only find some roots . . ." the soldier sighed. "There must be some edible roots. . . ."

But there were no roots in the dark, ploughed soil. The southern night came on quickly; the last rays of the setting sun had barely faded when the stars began to twinkle in the dark blue sky, and around us the shadows grew closer and closer, shutting out the endless plane of the steppes. . . .

"Mates," the "student" whispered, "a man is lying over there, to the left. . . ."

"A man?" the soldier asked doubtfully. "Why should he lie there?"

"Go and ask. He must have bread with him to station himself in the steppes . . ." the "student" explained.

The soldier looked in the direction where the man lay, then expectorating resolutely on the ground said :

"Come, let us go to him !"

Only the keen green eyes of the "student" could have distinguished that the dark mass lying about a hundred yards to the left of the road was a man. We hastened towards him, quickly stepping over the lumps of ploughed earth, and feeling how the newly born hope of food quickened the pangs of our hunger. We were quite near, but the man did not move.

"Perhaps it is not a man," the soldier said gloomily, giving expression to the general thought. But our doubt vanished that very instant, for the mass on the ground suddenly moved, seemed to grow, and we saw it was a real, living man, kneeling down, with his hand stretched towards us. And he was saying in a hoarse, trembling voice :

"Don't come near, or I'll fire !"

A dry click resounded in the turbid air.

We stopped as at a military command and for several seconds we were silent, dazed by the unfriendly greeting.

"Confound the beast," the soldier muttered expressively.

"A revolver, to be sure," the "student" said pensively ; "an adventurous fish one can see. . . ."

"Hi !" the soldier called out, evidently resolving on something.

The man was silent and did not change his attitude.

"Hi, there ! We won't touch you . . . only give us some bread . . . something to eat. For Christ's sake, mate ! . . . Be damned to you, you devil !"

The latter was added under his breath.

The man was mute.

"Do you hear ?" the soldier went on, trembling with rage and despair. "Give us some bread. We won't come near you ; throw it to us. . . ."

"Very well, . . ." the man said curtly.

"My dear brothers," he might have added, and had he put into these three Christian words the purest and holiest of feelings they would not have roused us more or made us more human than his curt "Very well."

"Don't be afraid of us, my good man," the soldier went on gently, with an ingratiating smile on his face, though the man could not have seen his smile, for all that he was lying no more than twenty paces away from us ; "we are peaceful fellows . . . tramping from Russia to Kuban. . . . We got short of money on the road . . . and sold everything we possessed. . . . It is now the second day since we tasted any food."

"Catch!" the good man said, with a swing of his arm. A black lump flew through the air and fell some little distance from us on the ploughed soil. The "student" hastened to get it.

"Catch again, again! That is all; I haven't any more. . . ."

When the "student" had collected the objects given in this original way it appeared that there were about four pounds of stale wheaten bread. It was covered with earth and very hard. The first did not engage our attention, the second was very fortunate for us, as stale bread is more satisfying than new, it containing less moisture.

"There—there—and there!" the soldier said, solemnly giving each our portion. "But stop—they are not equal. As for you, scholar, I must break a piece off yours, or else he will have too little."

The "student" without a word submitted to about an ounce of his bread being taken from him. I took the piece and put it into my mouth. I began to chew it slowly, slowly, scarcely able to control the convulsive movements of the jaws that were ready to crunch stones. I experienced a keen pleasure in feeling the quick convulsions of the throat and being able to satisfy it a little, drop by drop. Mouthful after mouthful, warm and inexplicably, indescribably delicious, the food penetrated into the burning stomach and seemed at once to turn to blood and brain. A joy, such a strange, peaceful quickening joy made the heart warm, in the same measure that the stomach was filled, and a feeling of drowsiness came over me. I forgot about these days of chronic hunger, forgot about my comrades engrossed in the pleasures of the same sensations that I had experienced. But when with the palm of my hand I put the last crumbs of bread into my mouth I realised that I was still deadly hungry.

"I daresay the fiend has some more bread, or some meat perhaps. . . ." the soldier mumbled, sitting opposite me on the ground and rubbing his hands over his stomach.

"No doubt he has; the bread smelt of meat. . . . At any rate he is sure to have some more bread. . . ." the "student" said, then added softly: "If it were not for the revolver. . . ."

"I wonder who he is, eh?"

"A man of our complexion, I suppose. . . ."

"The dog!" the soldier said viciously.

We were sitting close together, casting sidelong glances at the spot where our benefactor lay with the revolver. Not a sound or a sign of life reached us from him.

The night closed around us with its powers of darkness. A deadly silence reigned in the steppes; we could hear our own breathing. From time to time the melancholy squeak of a marmot could be

heard. The stars—the living flowers of the sky—shone brightly above our heads. . . . We were hungry.

It is not without a feeling of pride that I say that on this extraordinary night I was no better and no worse than my comrades. I suggested to them that we should go boldly up to the man and without doing him any harm eat all the food we found about him. Even if he attempted to fire only one of us would fail, and it was possible that the shot would not be absolutely deadly.

"Come on!" the soldier exclaimed, jumping up.

The "student" rose more slowly.

And we started almost at a run, the "student" creeping behind us.

"Comrade!" the soldier rebuked him.

We were met by a dull murmuring and a sharp click. There was a flash and a shot rang out.

"Missed!" the soldier exclaimed joyfully reaching the man at one bound. "Now, you devil, you will get it from us. . . ."

The "student" rushed for the wallet.

The "devil" rolled over from his knees to his back, and throwing up his arms began to wail.

"What the devil? . . ." the soldier exclaimed in astonishment, his foot ready in the air to give the man a kick. "What is he howling about? Hi, what is the matter with you? Have you hit yourself, eh?"

"Here's bread and meat and cakes . . . quite a lot!" the "student's" voice could be heard exultantly.

"Well, die there, damn you! . . . Let us eat, mates!" the soldier cried.

I snatched the revolver out of the man's hand. He had ceased his moaning and was now lying motionless. Only one cartridge remained in the chamber.

Again we were eating, eating silently. The man was also silent, not moving a single limb. We paid no attention to him.

"And was it really only food you wanted, mates?" a hoarse, trembling voice asked suddenly.

We all started. The "student" nearly choked, and bending down, started coughing violently.

The soldier, chewing, began to abuse him.

"You dog! May you burst like a dry twig. Did you think we wanted your skin. What use would it be to us? Confound your ugly face! To fire at people like that! . . ."

He went on eating while the abusive words fell from his lips, losing most of their force and expressiveness in consequence.

"You wait till we've finished eating, then we'll settle with you," the "student" announced viciously.

Then the stillness of the night was suddenly broken by a moaning and sobbing that frightened us.

"How should I know, mates? I fired . . . because I was afraid. I was coming from Kovy Afon . . . in the Smolensk Government. . . . Oh, Lord! A fever came upon me . . . when the sun set. Woe is me! I left Afon because of the fever there. . . . I am a carpenter in Afon . . . a carpenter . . . I have a wife . . . and two little girls at home . . . it is more than three years since I've seen them . . . you can eat everything you find, mates. . . ."

"We will do that without your invitation," the "student" said.

"By the Lord, had I known that you were such quiet, decent folk, I would not have fired. And you know, mates, in the steppes here. . . . Am I to blame, eh?"

He wept as he spoke, or rather he gave forth a kind of trembling, timid wail.

"What a worm, to be sure!" the soldier said contemptuously.

"I expect he's got some money with him," the "student" announced.

The soldier half shut his eyes and looked at him with a smile.

"Right, mate. . . . Well, now let us light a fire and go to sleep."

"And he?" asked the "student."

"The devil take him! We can't roast him, can we?"

"He deserves to be roasted," the "student" said, with a shake of his pointed head.

We went to fetch the materials that we had thrown down where the carpenter had stopped us with his threatening cry, brought them back quickly, and were soon seated around a camp fire. It rose with a gentle heat in the still night air, illuminating the small space on which we sat. We were inclined to sleep, though we could still have supped once more.

"Mates!" the carpenter called out to us. He was lying three paces away, and at times it seemed to me that he was muttering something to himself.

"Yes?" the soldier said.

"Can I come to you . . . to the fire? Death is on me . . . my bones seem all broken. . . . My God! I shall never get home, never. . . ."

"Crawl over here," the "student" said.

The carpenter, slowly, as though fearing to lose an arm or a leg, moved over the ground to the fire. He was a tall, terribly emaciated man; everything seemed to hang on him, and his large glazed eyes reflected his consuming pain. His contorted face was haggard, and even by the light of the camp fire it appeared yellow and ghastly. He was trembling in every limb, and aroused in us a scornful pity.

He stretched his long arms to the fire and rubbed his bony fingers, the joints of which bent slowly and languidly. He was disgusting to look at.

"Why do you travel on foot in the condition you are in? Are you too mean to spend the fare, eh?" the soldier asked severely.

"They advised me not to go on the water, but to go by the Crimea; the air would do me good, they said. But I cannot walk any more. . . . I am dying, mates! dying alone in the steppes. . . . My flesh will be food for the birds, and no one will know. . . . My wife . . . my daughters . . . are expecting me . . . I wrote and told them I was coming . . . and my bones will be washed by the rain of the steppes. . . . Oh Lord, oh Lord!"

He howled with the forlorn cry of a wounded wolf.

"Shut up, you devil!" the soldier shouted in a rage, jumping to his feet. "Why do you whine? Why can't you leave a man in peace? If you must die, then be quiet about it. . . . Of what good are you, anyway? Hold your peace!"

"Give him a knock on the head," the "student" suggested.

"Let us go to sleep," I said. "And as for you, if you want to remain by the fire, then you had better stop whining, or I expect . . ."

"Do you hear?" the soldier asked furiously. "Understand once and for all! Do you think we are going to pity you and bother about you because you threw some bread at us and tried to fire a bullet into us? Confound you! Other men would . . . fugh! . . ."

The soldier ceased and stretched himself on the ground.

The "student" was already lying down. I, too, lay down. The scared carpenter shrank into a heap, and drawing nearer to the fire, fixed his eyes upon it in silence. I lay to the right of him and could hear his teeth chattering. The soldier, lying on his back with his arms under his head, was staring up at the sky.

"What a night, eh? So many stars . . . warmth . . .," he turned to me after a short silence. "The sky is more like a blanket. I love this wandering life, my friend. It's a cold, hungry life, but free, very free. . . . There is no one over you . . . you are master of your own fate. . . . If you want to bite your own head off, no one can say you nay. . . . It is good. . . . How hungry I was these last days and vicious, but now, here I am lying down and looking up at the sky. . . . The stars are winking at me, as though to say: 'It doesn't matter, Lakutin; roam over the earth, learn all there is to learn, and don't submit to any one.' . . . Yes, and the heart feels good. . . . And you, carpenter, how do you feel? Don't be angry with me for being cross, and don't be afraid of anything.

. . . If we ate your bread, we meant no harm—you had bread and we hadn't, so we ate yours. . . . And you, like a savage, fired bullets at us. . . . Don't you know that bullets are dangerous? I was very angry with you. If you hadn't fallen down I should have paid you out for your impudence. And as for the bread—to-morrow you can get as far as Perekop and buy some more there. I know you've got money. . . . How long is it since you've had the fever?"

For a long time the soldier's heavy bass and the trembling voice of the ailing carpenter droned against my ear. The night, dark and dense, descended closer to the earth, and the fresh, fragrant air was pleasant to breathe.

The camp fire gave out an even light and a delicious warmth. . . . The eyes closed, and, through the drowsiness, something soothing and purifying hovered in front of them.

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"Hi, get up, quickly! We must be off!"

With a start I opened my eyes and jumped quickly to my feet, assisted by the soldier, who, with a tug at my arm, pulled me up from the ground.

"Make haste! March!"

His face was solemn and anxious. I looked around me. The sun was rising, and a red ray lay across the immobile, blue face of the carpenter. His mouth was open, his eyes started out of his head with a glassy expression of horror. The garments over his breast were torn asunder, and he lay in an unnatural, contorted position. The "student" was nowhere to be seen.

"Well, have you seen enough? Be off, I tell you!" the soldier said significantly, pulling me by the arm.

"Is he dead?" I asked, shuddering with the keenness of the morning air.

"Of course he is. If some one were to strangle you I suppose you would be dead," the soldier explained.

"Was it . . . the 'student'?" I exclaimed.

"Who else then? Was it you or I? Yes. He finished him off nicely, the scholar, and left us both in the lurch. Had I only suspected it I would have killed that 'student' yesterday. I would have killed him at once—with one blow of my fist. There would have been one blackguard the less in the world! Do you realise what he's done? We must take care that not a living soul sees us in the steppes. Do you understand? The carpenter may be discovered to-day, and they will see that he's been strangled and robbed. They will look out for men of our sort . . . and want to know where we are going and where we spent the night. They will

catch us, though you and I have nothing . . . but this revolver I have in my breast. A pretty thing!"

"You had better throw it away," I counselled.

"Throw it away?" he asked musing. "A costly thing it is. . . . And they may not catch us after all. No, I won't throw it away. Who knows that the carpenter carried firearms? I won't throw it away. . . . It must be worth three roubles at least, and then there is a cartridge in it. How I should like to put it through that 'student's' head! The dog! I wonder how much money he walked away with? The cursed pig!"

"And what about the wife's little girls?" I ventured.

"Little girls? What girls? Oh, the carpenter's! They will grow up and get married, I suppose. Besides, they have nothing to do with the case. Let us get away quickly, mate. . . . Which way shall we go?"

"I don't know. . . . It makes no difference."

"And I don't know, and I know that it makes no difference. Let us go to the right—the sea must be there."

We walked towards the right.

I turned back. At some distance from us, a dark little mound rose in the steppes with the sun shining on it.

"Are you looking to see if he's risen? Have no fear, he won't run after us. That scholar of ours managed the job well. . . . A nice comrade, to be sure! He tricked us jolly well! Ah, mate! men grow worse and worse from year to year!" the soldier said sadly.

The steppes, silent and deserted, and bathed in the bright morning sun, spread out before us, touching the sky at the horizon, so clear and gentle and glorious that all dark and unjust deeds seemed out of place amidst the vast space of this free plain, covered by the dome of the blue sky.

"I want to chew something, mate," my comrade said, rolling a cigarette out of some cheap tobacco.

"What and where and how shall we eat to-day? That's a problem."

.

With these words my neighbour in the hospital ward finished his story, saying to me:

"That is all. I got very friendly with that soldier, and we walked together as far as the Karsky province. He was a good, practical, kind-hearted fellow, a typical, barefooted tramp. I had a great respect for him. We walked together as far as Asia Minor, and there we lost sight of each other. . . ."

"Do you ever think of the carpenter?" I asked.

"As you see—or as you have heard. . . ."

"Nothing more?"

He laughed.

"What must I feel about it? I am not to blame for what happened to him, any more than you are not to blame for what happened to me. And no one is to blame for anything, even though we are all brutes."

MAXIM GORKY

BOLESLOV

THIS is what a friend of mine told me one day :

While I was studying at Moscow I lived in a little house where a strange girl was my neighbour. She was Polish ; her name was Teresa. She was tall, strong, brown, with heavy eyebrows and vulgar features, as if carved with an axe. Her eyes looked dull, she had a deep voice, and her manners were those of a prize-fighter. Heavy and muscular of body, her whole appearance was fearfully ugly. We had opposite rooms in the garret. I never opened my door when I knew she was at home. Sometimes I met her on the stairway or in the yard, and she smiled at me with a sort of cynical smile. Often I saw her coming home with red eyes, her hair in disorder. At such times she met my gaze with an impudent stare. Then she would say : "Hullo, student !"

Her stupid laugh was disgusting. I would have changed my rooms to avoid meeting her ; but the place was so pleasant, with the unobstructed view over the city, and the street was so quiet, that I stayed.

One morning, after I had dressed and was lying on my bed, the door opened suddenly and Teresa appeared on the threshold.

"Hullo, student !" she said in her deep voice.

"What do you want ?" I asked.

I looked at her. Her face wore an expression of confused shyness, something I had never noticed before.

"Student," she said, "I want to ask you a favour. Please don't refuse it !" Lying there on my bed, I thought, "This is only a pretext." But I said nothing.

"I should like to write a letter home," she continued.

"What the deuce is she driving at ?" I thought. I jumped up from the bed, took a seat at the table, got paper and ink, and said, "Come in ; sit down and dictate."

She entered, sat down cautiously and shot a keen look into my eyes.

"Well, to whom shall I write ?" I asked.

"To Boleslov Kaschput, who lives at Swenziani, on the Warsaw Railroad."

"What do you want me to write? Go ahead——"

"My dear Boles—my sweetheart—my love—my soul—may the Blessed Virgin protect you! My dear, why have you not written for so long a time to your little dove, Teresa, who feels so sad?"

I could hardly help laughing at her. To think of this "sad little dove," almost six feet high, robust, with fists like an athlete, and a face as black as if the "dove" had done nothing all its life but sweep chimneys!

But I kept my face straight and asked: "Who is this Boleslov?"

"Boles, sir?" she replied, with an air of astonishment, as if it was inconceivable that any one should not know who Boleslov was.

"Boles is my betrothed——"

"Betrothed?"

"Why should you be so surprised, student? Can't a young girl like me have a sweetheart?" she said.

"A young girl"—what a joke! "Maybe," I said. "Everything is possible. How long have you been engaged?"

"For ten years."

Well, I wrote a letter for her, so full of love and tenderness that I myself would have liked to be in Boleslov's place, if the message had come from any one but Teresa.

"Thank you with all my heart, student," said Teresa. She appeared deeply moved. "Can I do something for you?"

"No, thanks."

"I can mend your shirts and clothes, student." That annoyed me somewhat, and I assured her briefly that I did not need her services. So she left.

Two weeks went by. One evening I was sitting at the window, whistling and wondering what I might do for some distraction. It was awful weather outside, and I did not like to go out. Suddenly the door opened.

"For heaven's sake!" I thought. "Somebody is coming."

"Student, are you very busy just now?" It was Teresa. Well, I would rather have seen somebody else.

"No. Why?"

"I wanted you to write another letter for me."

"All right. To Boles?"

"No. I want his answer——"

"What!" I exclaimed.

"Excuse me, student; I'm stupid. I didn't express myself clearly. It is not for me, but for one of my friends—that is, not a friend, but an acquaintance. He does not know how to write—he has a betrothed like me——"

I glanced up at her. She looked ashamed ; her hands trembled and she was confused. I thought I understood.

"Listen, my girl," I said. "All that you tell me about yourself and Boleslov, and so on—all this is pure imagination ; you were lying. It is only a pretext for coming here. I do not want to have anything to do with you any more ; you understand ?"

I saw that she was frightened. She blushed and tried hard to say something. I began to feel that I had misjudged her. She had not come, after all, with the grotesque idea of leading me from the path of virtue. There was something behind this. But what ?

"Student——" she began ; but with a sudden gesture she turned on her heel and went from the room.

I remained with an uneasy feeling in my heart. I heard her close her door with a bang. She was angry. I reflected for a moment and resolved to call her back. I would write the letter. I felt sorry for her.

I went to her room. She sat at her table, her face in her hands.

"My girl," I said, "you——"

When I come to this point in my story I always feel deeply touched. She jumped up, came straight to me, her eyes shining, put her arms on my shoulders and sobbed as if her heart would break.

"What—what—difference—does it—make to you—to—to—write these—few—lines ? Oh—you—looked like such a good—fellow ! Yes—there is no—Boleslov—and—no—Teresa. There is only—me—me alone !" "What !" I said, quite dumbfounded by her words. "Then there is no—no Boles at all ?"

"No."

"And no Teresa ?"

"No—that is—I am Teresa."

My head was in a whirl. I looked at her in astonishment. One of us was surely crazy. She went back to the table, fumbled in the drawer and brought out a piece of paper.

"Here," she said, coming back to me ; "here, take back this letter you wrote for me. You do not want to write a second one. Other people with kinder hearts will do it."

She held in her hand the letter I had written for her to Boleslov. What in the world did it mean ? "Listen, Teresa," I said. "What is all this ? Why do you want other people to write letters for you when you haven't posted this one ?"

"To whom should I post it ?"

"Why, to Boleslov—your betrothed !"

"But—there's no such person !" I gave it up. The only thing I could do was to go away. But she began again :

"No, he does not exist ; there is no Boleslov"—with a gesture that indicated how impossible it was to explain. "But, *I want him*

to live. I know I am not like others—I know what I am—but it does not harm anybody if I write to him.”

“What do you mean? To whom?”

“Why, to Boleslov!”

“But you told me just now,” I interjected, still puzzled, “that there was no such person.”

“Oh, Mother of God! What do I care if there isn’t! There *is* nobody, but I *imagine* that there is a Boleslov. I write to him as if he were real, and he answers; I write again, and he answers again——” At last I understood. I felt guilty, ashamed, with a shock as if of physical pain. Beside me, almost within arm’s reach, lived a poor human being who had not a soul in the world to show her the least affection; no parents, no friends, nothing! And this poor creature had invented a lover, a bridegroom, for herself!

She went on in her deep, monotonous voice: “This letter you wrote for me to Boleslov—I asked somebody else to read it aloud to me. I listened and imagined that Boleslov lived. And then I asked for a reply from Boles to his Teresa—to me. I feel almost sure that Boleslov lives—somewhere—I don’t know where—and so I can manage to live. It is not so hard, so terrible, so lonely!”

Well, from that day on, twice a week regularly, I wrote letters from Teresa to Boles and from Boles to Teresa. I give you my word, they were full of passion, especially the replies. And she—she listened to the reading, sobbed, laughed, and was happy. In return she took care of my clothes, mended my shirts and socks, cleaned my shoes, and brushed my hat.

Three months later she was arrested on some suspicion and put in gaol. I have never seen her again. She must have died.

ALEXANDER I. KUPRIN

B. 1870

PSYCHE

November 23rd.—One might ask me the simple question as to why I have taken to keeping a diary again after giving it up for five years; and really there is nothing more absurd than keeping a diary or writing one's autobiography. In the first place, they all begin alike, the author's first duty being to assure the reader, by all that is holy, that he is not writing for the public, but merely for his own personal amusement. Or they say, "So that I, a grey-haired old man, surrounded by a crowd of rosy-cheeked children, may re-live the past and feel again what I felt as a blossoming youth, and that the solitary tears of reminiscence . . .," or something like it. But long before they have attained their grey hairs they flourish it about and show it off. Many times will such a one re-read his recollections—of no interest except to himself—to some timid, ethereal, provincial creature who will tremble with the rush of unknown sensations—and quietly yawn behind her pocket-handkerchief. How vulgar it is that really intelligent people should be ready to parade their petty personal sensations, and consider it sensible and in good taste!

As for me, my diary is far too important for me, and, needless to say, I shall not read it to any one.

To-day the doctor informed me that if I continued the life I have been leading for the past three years—that is, constant starvation, insomnia, and working like a horse—I would have a complete nervous breakdown. The young doctor did not mince matters with me. He advised a holiday in the Crimea, when I haven't even the money for a pair of goloshes! However, I understood quite well that he inferred that I was going mad; the more so as many of my worthy ancestors were drunkards and lunatics. In this book I shall set down all my thoughts until I begin to feel the signs of abnormality, and then . . . either the hospital or, if I have sufficient will-power left, a bullet through my brain.

November 26th.—Whose fault is it? I am certainly possessed of great talent and originality; there is no need to show off before

myself. I am, of course, not confirmed in this opinion because I have been given a gold medal by the academy council with whom I happen to disagree on questions of art, nor by the praise of newspaper critics. I am no longer a boy, and can gauge things at their true value, for "human honour is as senseless as a dream." But I feel myself in the presence of an intense and mighty creative force; my observation is keen, I can catch quickly the smallest details of objects, and above all I have never had to strain my imagination, as many artists have to when hunting for subjects. Gigantic thoughts, each bolder and more original than the preceding, come crowding into my head, so fast as to make me feel afraid. And above all, during the process of creation, as though in a religious ecstasy, I feel the sweet consciousness of an unknown god within me. My head is on fire, cold waves run down my back, my hair turns cold and stands on end, my spirit exults. And mocking fate, as though on purpose, has placed me in the sad position of not being able to complete a single one of these precious images. Fighting for one's daily bread is incompatible with free creation! Sometimes, with danger to life and reason, one must veer from dreams of fame to the perspective of death by starvation. Hunger is the very worst food for inspiration. But then, with my uncontrollable rush of fantasies and the inner activity that exhausts me, I cannot become a clerk or a shoemaker!

November 27th.—To-day I finished my twelfth Pushkin. I have got so used to modelling them that I could work with my eyes closed, and they all come out as like as peas. Pushkins sell easily just now on account of some 50th celebration or other, but the dealer to whom I take my statues is not satisfied with my work. "You lack variety," he says dryly. "What we want is a varied series; the public taste differs so." I am sometimes nauseated at the thought that it may be necessary to change over to this dreary daily work. I notice sometimes, with horror, that after a week's work on my funereal profile busts of warriors they begin to take on the same characteristics, like a director of a department or a merchant of the first guild. But what is to be done when ten or twenty roubles enable me to be the master of my inspirations for a whole month!

November 28th.—For some reason or other it is generally assumed that a drunkard borders on the state of idiocy. An astonishingly wrong conclusion! Meanwhile I must confess that I have got into the habit of drinking vodka in these cursed lodgings, that, thanks to my carelessness, are never heated. At first I limited the amount to two or three glasses, merely to warm myself. Now I am almost drunk while writing. My brain is very active and remarkably clear; it notices subtle little details of its sensations that would certainly have been lost to a sober brain.

Only my tongue and legs do not obey me, and my eyes work badly ; all objects lose their clear form and seem to be besprinkled with sand. But that signifies nothing. It is a well-known fact that many great masters created their immortal works when in the very same condition in which I am now. I wanted to work ; I have a certain great thing in view, but continued lying on the miserable couch that my landlady calls a bed, and dreamt of fate.

November 29th.—I awoke about mid-day with a terrible headache. I had a strange dream last night. I saw myself standing somewhere on the outskirts of the town. It seemed to be in autumn. The wind whistled through the telegraph wires, and a fine cold rain, that came in sharp gusts, covered all objects in a dull grey veil. Dusk began to fall and my heart was oppressed with a sensation of impending misfortune. . . . Suddenly, behind me, there was the sound of the stamping of many horses. I turned, and saw a strange sight. Ten or twelve horsemen, dressed in black from head to foot, were hurrying forward at terrific speed. Their horses wore black caparisons with round eye-holes. The horsemen came onwards quickly, turning neither back nor to one side. Each carried in his hand a tarred torch that burned with a red, smoky flame. I gathered that it was a funeral, and in fact, from some corner there appeared a hearse drawn by three pairs of horses, so swiftly as to keep up with the riders. The black coffin was covered with bright crimson roses. I ran after this strange procession and together we reached the cemetery. This was a very desolate place. The bare trees groaned and shook, throwing off their cold spray on to the earth ; there was a smell of earth and rotting yellow leaves.

The horsemen took the coffin and began lowering it into the grave, but the lid was not shut and I saw in it a marble statue of a girl of extraordinary, divine beauty. She reposed on a bed of bright green grass and was covered in red roses and camellias. I do not know how it was, but I recognised her instantly—it was sleeping Psyche !

I threw myself at the men who were lowering the coffin and shouted and cried in my endeavour to tell them that the being in the coffin was alive, but they laughed and pushed me away roughly. Again I managed to get to the coffin, put my arms round the beautiful cold body and found myself, together with it, in the grave. From above they were shovelling the earth on me . . . deeper and deeper.

At last, I could no longer breathe. I wanted to cry out, but my voice sounded no more than a whisper ; I made a desperate movement—and awoke.

November 30th.—Another wasted day. My "warriors" annoy me for some reason or other, I cannot endure to look on their coarse,

healthy muscles ! Then why have I worked at them with such affection for months on end, and why did I go to the ice factory, where for twenty kopeks I got two fellows to fight each other ? Instead, I thought the whole day of the wonderful statue with whom I had lain in the grave. Where have I seen this beautiful calm face, this body as tender as a girl's, the breasts scarcely formed, lissom and graceful yet naïve for all its nakedness ? And why was it Psyche in particular, and not Daphne or Flora ? I am interested in the psychology of dreams and have read a great deal on this subject. I knew very well that one does not see anything in a dream that one has not seen some time or other in reality. Probably I have seen my Psyche.

But where ? I go over all the classics in my mind yet fail to recall that face, strangely familiar yet impossible to describe. There is something in the highest degree fine about it, yet at the same time it is absurdly simple ! When I want to conjure up the image of it in my mind, I cannot get it on any account, yet I have only to think of something else for a moment and it floats before my eyes.

December 2nd.—I have scarcely the time to wash the clay from my hands to write a few lines in this stupid notebook. This is the third day that I have been modelling my Psyche. My nerves seem alive, the work goes easily and quickly, and when I go to bed each night I have the feeling of perfect balance of mind and heart—a condition near to blessedness. Some sculptors depict Psyche as an absolutely developed woman—an incomprehensible mistake !

Psyche is almost a child ; she is slight of stature and must produce the impression of a beautiful creature, vaguely and timidly realising her transformation from a child into a maiden.

Besides this I have made a still greater discovery. No other body but a virgin's should ever be cast, modelled or carved in any material, because sculpture is the purest, the highest, and certainly the most chaste of all the arts. For this reason, a sculptor when working should avoid having before his eyes either natural or lay figures, and particularly should conquer his carnal part. If the idea to be made incarnate in marble is mixed with vulgar reality, instead of the idea you get a travesty of it. It is not in vain that in our ancient art only the simplest instruments are used—hands and modelling sticks.

This notebook will not be read by any one but myself, so I can speak openly. Phidias, Canova, and Thorwaldsen, in spite of all their genius, could not separate themselves from the common everyday feelings of their private lives. A sculptor is only in a condition to create something great when he is himself pure and chaste. I am representing Psyche asleep. It is said that figures lose something in a lying posture, but that does not deter me.

December 4th.—My God! what tortures! what hellish labour, and nothing, nothing has come of it! Do what I will, I cannot remember the Psyche of my dream. From morning to night I work until I feel mad and exhausted, with no result! Before me is not the sleeping Psyche but a piquante subject with a sweet languor.

Yes! I have certainly overworked myself. Of course you cannot go on for eight days without taking off your working overall. I must try and rest.

December 6th.—What accursed rest is this? For two days I have not risen from the couch and am tortured by most horrible nightmares. All the events of the last few days are mixed up in my brain in the most incomprehensible manner. There are moments when I cannot make up my mind as to whether a certain event happened this morning or yesterday, or a week ago, or if I have read it in a book, or seen it in my sleep.

In general I have noticed more than once that my memory becomes clouded quickly, particularly since I dropped all my acquaintances and scarcely ever speak aloud. Like an old man, I can still remember clearly all that happened in my childhood, but about the present my memory is confused and hazy. For the greater part of the day I sleep and have a hundred dreams, but in these dreams I also see myself lying on the couch, usually repeating a thousand times over some stupid phrase and not knowing what to do from despair. These trivial dreams are so interwoven with trivial reality that I sometimes wonder with horror where the one begins and the other ends. At moments I seem to become sober and with despair I want to tear myself away from this cursed semi-consciousness. I want to shake myself, to distract myself a little, but in a short time the vortex of sleep again begins to suck me down.

The night is full of horror. I do not fall asleep until daylight, and, sometimes with terror, sometimes with amazement, I contemplate the tremendous file of pictures, statues, faces familiar and unfamiliar, that appear before my eyes without any action of my will and which disappear again against my desire. Some of the faces are simply hideous. They make horrid grimaces, roll terrible eyes, and put their tongues out. When one of them approaches my face I grow as cold as at the approach of death.

To rid myself of these hallucinations I drink several glasses of vodka and begin to feel better. Ought I to see a doctor?

December 8th.—Accidentally I happened to see myself in the mirror. I had not seen myself for three weeks and simply grew horrified when there looked out at me that long, yellow, terribly thin face with cheeks as drawn as those of a corpse, and sunken eyes, with black hollows beneath them. I positively hate my own

appearance. Man is supposed to be the glory of creation, but at this moment I undoubtedly belie that statement.

December 10th.—Can I describe what took place last night? I still cannot come to myself from the mass of sensations I have gone through. Words cannot convey a hundredth part of it, still I will endeavour to set out everything in order.

In the middle of the night I awoke feeling that some one had called me by name. This frequently happens with me when the moon shines full on my face. My room was filled with a silver-green light and seemed quite unfamiliar; the walls seemed to have grown and receded; every object looked strange and suspicious. I seemed to feel by instinct that some event of tremendous importance would take place instantly—at that very moment. My glance fell on Psyche. She lay on the floor; her body, covered over with damp cloths and bathed in a dead, soft light, seemed transparent. Mechanically seizing the modelling sticks I put in a few fine lines . . . and suddenly I cried out and trembled with joy: before me lay the same Psyche I had seen in my dreams, whose image I had tried so hard to recall! No words can express the wild joy that rose in my heart. At last I understood why her face had seemed so simple and familiar. It was the prototype of that divine beauty and harmony a striving for which is hidden in every man's breast from the day of his birth and which humanity has christened by the much hackneyed name "the ideal." Fate has granted us artists the means of reaching it, but until this momentous night we had all tormentingly and fruitlessly run after its shade. And I, I, a pale, ugly, weary sculptor, had reached it, had caught what until now seemed the impossible and had embodied it in a palpable form. Oh! I understand quite well that my talent had nothing to do with it and that my hand had been led by chance. It is for this very reason that no one but myself must ever see Psyche, because if man ever develops art to such a degree, it will only be in a thousand years to come. First of all, man will get to know and conquer all those forces of nature that at the present time enslave him, and then when he reaches the goal, this eternal truth and beauty, he will cease to be man. God only knows what consequences might follow upon the public appearance of my Psyche. She must lie in the ground for a hundred years, like the works of the ancient Greeks, until her time comes and fate takes her out like a beacon that must light up the hill-top.

Not dated.—I have written nothing for the past few days because of an unbearable headache. There are moments when some one seems to be hammering on my skull, and every movement causes excruciating pains. By the way, to-day I spent all the money I had on plaster of Paris.

No date.—As soon as it began to get dark in the room I carefully drew the curtains, lit the lamp, and stood for a long time silently contemplating the unearthly beauty of my creation that lay before me.

This is what is so wonderful : everything that man has pursued to madness from time immemorial—fame, sensuality, patriotism, all earthly pleasures—one can get tired of, but the ecstasy that I now experience can never pall ! I wonder what would happen if she were a living woman ! It seems to me that one would have to kill her just as I am going to cover her with earth in a few days. But until then she is entirely mine, and her beauty belongs to me alone.

Mine ! Ah, if that word had not become so common by a thousand human desires !

My fate is wonderfully strange. I am thirty-five years old and absolutely weary of life. But even in the days of my youth there did not exist for me the charm of feminine caresses. Perhaps with my particularly abnormal organism I had no need of them. When women plainly avoided all contact with me, I was not in the least hurt, but soon grew pleased. I had never known women, nor kisses, nor caresses, nor affectionate glances. And this fate, as though out of a sense of justice, has sent me the most incredibly high happiness,—a happiness that can never be experienced by those defiled by the impure love of women. But this is not all ; I know, I have a presentiment, that a greater happiness is in store for me, clothed for the time being in secrecy ! Ah ! Now I have finished the mould in plaster of Paris, and it lies before me, blinding in its whiteness.

December 15th.—I have forgotten to put dates in my diary as I had other things to think about. My landlady informed me that as to-day was the 15th of December, it was exactly three months since I had paid for my lodgings. The poor woman it seems is partly sorry for me and partly afraid. However, what can one expect ? It is not for nothing that to common people the word "artist" has come to be a synonym for madman or blackguard.

I write and am bothered by a curious circumstance. At moments I forget certain letters and it costs me a great deal of pains to recall them. Why is this ? But it is of no consequence. A great thought has occurred to me. If the proverb accords every lord the right to his fancy, who can forbid a free artist to enjoy his for once in his life ? This is my idea. . . . I do not remember whether I recorded in my diary the dream in which I saw *her* first, in the coffin. I think I did. I want to resurrect entirely into reality that first impression, that is, to place her in a nice fir coffin lined with dark velvet and strewn with green. But where can I get the money ?

December 16th.—To-day Slivinsky, one of my Academy colleagues, came to see me. He is a very curious man. At a first meeting he

conveys the impression of a madman ; his hair is always dishevelled, his glance now wanders about aimlessly, now suddenly becomes fixed on the face of the person who happens to be talking to him, though Slivinsky neither sees nor hears him, but is occupied with his own thoughts. Sometimes he interrupts you by some question that has no relation to the subject under discussion, and is merely some conclusion he has arrived at in his own train of thoughts. He is terribly absent-minded, a passionate lover of women—a fact that frequently disgusts me—and is always hunting for adventures. In every-day affairs he is quite a child, and if, in his presence, the conversation turns on worldly matters he sits silently biting his nails. His hobby-horse is psychology in general and psychology of woman's heart in particular. I love talking to him because sometimes such amazing ideas occur to me that seem absurd to all but him. He understands at once and knows beforehand what I am going to say—he has an extraordinary gift that way. At times, when we happen to see much of each other, we dig down so deeply into the innermost recesses of our hearts and disclose such awful filth that we become the worst of enemies. I heard his voice on the stairs and wanted to send someone to say that I was not at home, but it was too late ; I had scarcely time to drag the sheet from the bed and cover Psyche with it. Not a single human being shall see her as long as I live !

"What is the matter with you !" Slivinsky said, before we had barely exchanged greetings, and in a most unceremonious manner looked me up and down.

"What do you mean ? Have I grown horns on my forehead that you stare at me like that ?" I asked rudely, on purpose to draw his attention from a certain direction.

"No, not horns. Had there been horns there would have been cause to wonder indeed, but your face looks like a squeezed lemon, and there are purple lines under your eyes."

I was silent.

"And do you know what I think, brother ?" Slivinsky asked suddenly, with some agitation. "I suppose it never enters your head that you are going to die soon ?"

"Leave off, please."

"You don't believe me ? But I plainly see in your face the lines of a peculiar spiritual beauty. Do you understand ? I often noticed when I was in the hospital that with nervous people, a few weeks before death, the soul, freeing itself, destroyed its prison. However, let us drop it. What are you doing now ? Are you working ?"

Ah ! I must be cunning ! However, I knew what would happen, and I replied so indifferently that I even surprised myself ; not one of our clever actors could have controlled his voice so naturally.

"I lie on the couch, think a little of immortality, gossip with my landlady ; on the whole I pass the time interestingly and usefully."

Slivinsky fixed his heavy gaze on my face.

"You lie, brother," he concluded suddenly. "You have some inner ebullition. But never mind ; I do not ask for frankness. I came to you for this purpose. Do you know, spiritualism when you study it closely is not such arrant charlatanism as one is led to think. . . ."

And with his usual enthusiasm and eloquence he began to explain his incredibly bold theory of media, yet not without a touch of humour. Taking advantage of a momentary silence I asked :

"And what have you been doing all this time ? Why don't you tell me about yourself ?"

"I haven't done a thing," he replied, dropping his spiritualism. "And do you know why ? In the first place, because I seem to have a vocation for women rather than for sculpture ; it must have been love of woman's body that made me study our art. In the second place, and I mean this quite seriously, our art is a very poor one ; it is as cold as marble, to which it is allied, and just as pure. I may be mistaken, but in my opinion a sculptor who is destined to create an immortal work must be just such an anchorite and as abnormal as you are. . . ."

How strange ! This man always utters the thoughts that I can never decide to put into words ; it is not for nothing that I call him my conscience. It would be interesting to know by what different paths we reach the same conclusions.

"Do you know," Slivinsky continued, and instantly I knew by the gentle tone of his voice that he was going to talk on his beloved theme, "earlier, I might have turned out to be of use, but lately I have been so lax morally as to be ruined for art. I am not content with this severe purity of line, this lifeless plaster of Paris. I could still perhaps become a painter, only because a painter has the arrangement of paints, colour, and shade. Painting is more sensual. But I have no desire to join any such company. Youth is given to men only once, and of course not with the purpose of destroying it or burying it, as you have done, entirely in one art."

"To combine these objects is the ideal of sensation hunters—I am not of their number."

"I don't know what to do with myself, but meanwhile I wisely enjoy all the gifts that beneficent nature and quick wits have bestowed on man, and in doing so I place woman, of course, in the foreground—lovely woman."

"And don't you think this vocation will bore you after a time ?"

"Never ! Don't you see, my boy, that I belong to the chosen people who have developed in themselves such a subtle receptiveness

that they enjoy most the details, the accessories of love, so to speak, rather than love itself in the coarse, vulgar sense of the word. And as these accessories are as varied as human nature itself, it follows that there will always exist for me the charm of novelty. Ah! what a pity you are such a degenerate and cannot understand me. Do you know, for instance, the mysterious unfathomable charm there is in the gradual process of becoming intimate with a woman? Those timid hints when the eyes have told all, those quarrels and oppressive bursts of jealousy, the first confusion. . . . But of course you understand nothing of this."

"I understand quite well that it is a gastronomic corruption!" I interrupted with displeasure.

Slivinsky looked at me with amazement. He seemed to think me incapable of such a reply.

"Perhaps you are right," he drawled pensively, but instantly brightened again. "Yes; but do you know the struggles involved in this corruption? How often one has to use all one's brain, all one's strength? Listen! Do you know to what lengths a man's will may carry him? Have you ever considered the question?"

This time I noticed that Slivinsky awaited my answer with interest.

"I cannot pretend to understand your question thoroughly," I replied, "but if by the word 'will' you imply, as I do, every desire in life, then as you know I have always considered it more convenient to man to deny this same 'will.'"

"Oh! do leave your Schopenhauer alone!" Slivinsky exclaimed with annoyance. "I meant 'will' in the worldly sense of the word, that is, as meaning the strength of the most prosaic desires. In my opinion the intensity of man's desires, yours and mine, can endow us with such gigantic powers that nothing need be impossible for us in this world!"

It seems according to Slivinsky that the will can be cultivated by a form of constant and persistent gymnastic exercises consisting in acting against one's desires every minute of the day. If at a given moment I am hungry I must endure it as long as I can, if I want to lie down I must walk about, if I like to sleep on a soft bed I must train myself to sleep on stones, and so on. When in this manner man has completely subjected his will, then all those around him, men and beasts, will involuntarily and imperceptibly become subordinate to his desires. For that man there will be no obstacles except those presented by time.

"Don't you see," Slivinsky continued enthusiastically, "that by constantly following one idea I cannot only become Pope of Rome or Emperor of China, but even the greatest genius or scholar. Have

you heard of the negro slave who, unable to read or write, developed his memory to such a degree by concentration that he could repeat off by heart five hundred ciphers of eight meanings that had been dictated to him? But that is nothing. I can give you better examples. How do you think Napoleon rose from a simple lieutenant to one of the greatest emperors in history? You think it was only fortune? No doubt it was partly fortune, because in his undertakings there frequently happened favourable combinations of circumstances—but principally it was the strength of his desires. Where you and I allow our chances to escape us tens of thousands of times, the man who firmly resolves to make use of them is not deterred by risks, sacredness of tradition, or the number of his victims. Strength of desire and confidence! That is everything—that is the famous lever of Archimedes. In the Scriptures it is said that those that have faith may remove mountains, and such faith is attainable by all whose desires are unusually concentrated. The Fakirs heal the sick and make the dead to rise. . . .”

I did not recognise Slivinsky; he seemed to have grown taller and more imposing; his eyes shone with the fires of inspiration and his voice sounded solemn and enraptured.

“I wonder that with your theory, you have so far remained a simple mortal,” I said, after a time.

“Why? Because I don’t want anything else, but I have tried my will on women, on whom I want to draw the conversation. Remember my great apophthegm—when you come to write your reminiscences about me, it will be useful to you; there is no man who, possessed of a strong and flexible will, cannot subdue and obtain for himself the love of a woman. And not only a woman with a sick imagination or what we call a temperament, but even one as inaccessible as a goddess and as cold as marble.”

“Do you think then that an actual statue could be thus hypnotised?”

In putting this question I felt my cheeks turn pale. It was as though I had looked into a dark abyss—it was painful and gay.

“It is possible,” Slivinsky replied seriously. “You remember the story of Galatea, and, as you know, there is not a single myth without some foundation. I have already said that there is nothing impossible to a strong will. And in the end, even if you do not actually bring the statue to life, you yourself, do you see, you yourself *will believe that you have done so!*”

Slivinsky rose to leave and in going out asked, “What is that you have covered with a sheet? May I have a look?”

Had I obeyed my first impulse and flown at his throat, this extraordinary man would have been sure to have got my secret

forcibly. As it was I did not move from my place, but extending my hand in the parting, replied, gathering my wits together :

"It is only a piece of rubbish lying about."

I did not suspect myself of such a store of cunning and self-possession ! Directly after Slivinsky's departure I made a screen with the sheets and hung it over *that* corner.

No date.—My head whirled, my hand trembled, and refuses to obey. I do not know whether I am in a fit state to collect my thoughts and set out correctly all that has happened. When night came I drew the curtains and lit the lamp. The room seemed suddenly to become solemn and mysterious. I could not tear my eyes from the white screen that enclosed the corner ; it seemed that behind it was some silent, invisible life. I was irresistibly drawn behind the screen, but I lingered, and as in a fever tried to drag out the burning expectancy as long as possible.

At last my agitation became insufferable and I resolved to put an end to it.

Holding my breath, I approached with cautious tread the sheets that hung from the ceiling, and put them aside with trembling hands. In this tiny enclosure, no more than three paces wide, there reigned the sweet silence of a sanctuary. *She* lay on the broad piece of coarse linen, covered from head to foot in a sheet which faintly indicated her wonderful form. *She* lay on her back, her left leg a little bent ; her head leaning a little to one side rested on her left arm, and the right hung negligently down to the ground.

I do not say that I was afraid ; had she at this moment raised herself from her stone couch and spoken to me, I should not have been afraid ; I even seemed to expect it ; but I controlled my limbs with difficulty ; they seemed heavy—as though buried in sand ; countless, tiny glowing points danced before my eyes with amazing rapidity. But all the time I closely followed every one of my sensations and clearly noticed that the sheet covering her breasts slowly rose and fell, trembling with her soft breathing. My heart beat like a drum and was filled with a fatiguing delicious pain. . . .

After that I lose the thread. I only remember how I quietly fell on my knees, bending my head to the ground ; how I carefully raised the sheet ; how my lips drew near to her body. . . . But when my lips came in contact with her cold form, the unbearably sweet pain in my heart burst out and spread like a flame on which alcohol has been poured. . . . For a moment it seemed to me that it was death. I must have fainted, for when I opened my eyes the daylight was creeping in round the edges of the curtain.

What does it all mean ? Was Slivinsky right when he said that I would die soon ? Well, what of that ? I am prepared to meet death like a beloved guest, for could life tempt me with anything after

that moment of ecstasy I experienced last night? Ah, how I bless that which in my childhood seemed to me such a terrible misfortune, that caused my comrades to turn from me with contempt! It only protected me against corruption, and, denying me the principal human joy, had given fate the possibility of rewarding me abundantly.

No date.—To-day, for the first time in two months, I went out into the street. I must have produced a very strange impression on the passers-by, for all looked me up and down. The frosty air intoxicated me, the snow, sparkling in the sun, caused my eyes to fill with tears, and my legs, grown unaccustomed to walking, bent under me and shook my feeble body from side to side. Added to this, my coat was covered with down and the lining of wadding showing copiously in places completed the general impression. I wandered about in vain all day and failed to secure a single kopek. I must put off the idea of the coffin. My God! What is happening to me!

The same.—Why do not Slivinsky's enthusiastic words go out of my mind? I keep thinking the whole day, and the conclusions I come to, frighten me. Slivinsky said that to the will nothing was impossible. Consequently, one must be able consciously to concentrate the will, to desire obstinately, persistently, and untiringly. I know very well that an object made of stone could not of itself, of its own volition, rise from its place and come to me. But then, are there not hypnotised subjects roaming over field and flood which do not exist in reality? Perhaps people search for what does not and cannot exist. However, the devil himself could not solve this question!

The same.—I again awoke during the night with an unexpected shock and sat up quickly in bed. The moon was shining with unusual brightness and her beams seemed charged with a monotonous murmur.

Had I seen something in my sleep, or had I, during the day, been thinking on some important matter? It seemed to me that I had forgotten something of the utmost importance, and tried to recall what it was. And suddenly, like lightning, the terrible thought flashed through my mind, "One must know how to desire!" I got off the bed with difficulty, and again with that sweet trembling of the heart stole behind the curtain. My body shook with agitation, cold, and weakness; my jaws chattered unpleasantly. Slowly and cautiously, fearing to disturb Psyche's light slumber, I pulled the sheet off her; she did not move a muscle, but her breast rose and fell with a scarcely perceptible motion.

Oh, what omnipotent beauty there was in her calm face, in her gentle, semi-transparent, naked body! I gathered together all my

will-power, clenched my hands so that the nails cut into the flesh, controlled myself with an effort, and said commandingly and confidently :

"Awake !"

And suddenly, through the murmur of the stillness, there sounded a deep, broken sigh. The immobile face lit up with a smile, the eyes opened and gently met mine ! The acute, rapturous sensation in my heart again burst out and flowed wonderfully through the whole of my being. I cried out and fell down, but before losing consciousness I felt two cold, naked arms entwine themselves around my neck. . . .

The same.—I do not understand what is the meaning of this dark room with the grating from which peep strange, long-whiskered faces—or is it that prison from which Slivinsky said my soul must escape ?

The same.—My God ! How hard is victory ! At times I beat my head against the walls of my prison, pluck out my hair, and tear the flesh from my face.

When will it all end ?

No date.—Victory ! My hands will no longer obey me, my lungs take in less air with each breath. But in the unattainable height, midst waves of radiant light, I already see your gentle smile, my goddess, my Psyche !

ALEXANDER I. KUPRIN

LENOTCHKA

ON his way from St. Petersburg to the Crimea, Colonel Voznitsin of the General Staff purposely stopped for two days in Moscow, where he had spent his childhood and youth.

It is said that the higher animals, when feeling the approach of death, revisit their familiar haunts as though bidding them good-bye. An early death did not threaten Voznitsin—with his forty years he was still strong and well preserved. But in his tastes, feelings, and relations to the world at large there had taken place that imperceptible change which marks the decline to old age. His round of joys and pleasures shrunk almost of itself; the habit of retrospection appeared together with a sceptical disbelief in all “movements”; the unconscious, silent, unreasoning love for nature disappeared, giving place to a refined taste for beauty; the fascinating charm of women ceased to disturb him, and, above all—the first sign of spiritual decay—the thought of his own death no longer came to him in the former light-hearted transient manner as of old, when it used to seem that not he but some other person of the name of Voznitsin was to die sooner or later. Now it came with a cruel, irrevocable, merciless clearness that at night caused a shudder and made the heart fall apprehensively.

And thus he was drawn to revisit the old places for the last time; to revive in his memory the dear, painfully-sweet poetic recollections of his childhood; to open his soul to the sweet pain of the brightness and purity of the first impressions of life that had gone for ever beyond recall.

And that is what he did. For two days he went about Moscow visiting the old haunts. He drove over to the boarding school in the Gorohovy fields, where from the age of six he had been educated on the Froebel system by worthy old dames. There everything was changed; the boys' section no longer existed, but in the girls' class-room, as of old, there was the pleasant, alluring smell of the polished ash tables and forms mingled with the still more enticing smell of goodies, particularly apples, that, as in former days, were

stored in a special locked cupboard. Afterwards he went to the cadet corps and the military school. He also visited the house chapel at Kudim, where, as a boy cadet, he had served at the altar, handing the incense to the priest and coming out to the Evangel in a surplice. There also he had stolen the ends of wax candles, drunk the "tepid-water" after Communion, and with various grimaces made to sprinkle the absurd deacon, for which act he was once chased from the altar by the portly, majestic elder, who was wonderfully like the image of our Lord in the Cavaoth altarpiece.

He walked past the houses where he had experienced the first naïve, half-childish languor of love, went into the garden and up the stairs, and scarcely recognised anything, so changed and rebuilt was all, after a quarter of a century of absence. But to his grief and amazement Voznitsin observed that his desolate spirit and stale soul remained cold and unmoved, and did not reflect in itself the former familiar sadness respecting the past—such a bright, gentle, pensive, humble sadness. . . .

"Yes, yes—it is old age," he said to himself, shaking his head sadly. "Old age, old age, old age. . . . There is nothing to be done!"

After Moscow, some business matter took him for a day to Kiev, and he reached Odessa at the beginning of Passion Week. But a spring storm arose on the sea, and Voznitsin, who was not a good sailor, decided against taking ship. It was only on the morning of Passion Saturday that the weather grew calm and the sea still.

At six in the afternoon the steamer *The Grand Duke Alexei* left the Praktichiskoy Harbour. No one came to see him off, which pleased him very much. He could not endure the usually hypocritical and always tiresome comedy of saying good-bye, when, God only knows why, for the space of half an hour you stand on board smiling in a forced manner at the anxious people below on the dock, calling out every now and then senseless meaningless words in a theatrical tone, as though for the entertainment of the bystanders, kissing your hand to them, and at last, with a sigh of relief, feeling that the boat is slowly and heavily moving off.

The passengers that day were very few and these mostly third class. In the first class beside Voznitsin, as his valet informed him, there was only a lady and her daughter. "Excellent," the colonel thought with relief.

Everything promised a calm and comfortable voyage. He had an excellent cabin—large and light, with two couches standing in the corners and no upper berths. The sea, grown calm after the

"Well, tell me about you covered with small waves, but no longer Millieva? And Olet towards evening, however, it grew cold on

In the corps, Voznitsin slept, with open porthole, more soundly denied a furlough, for months, not to say years. In Eupatoria he and Christmas; by the sound of the steamer's sirens and the noise military school deck. He dressed quickly, ordered some tea and go to the count. The steamer was bathed in a semi-transparent, rosy. Many years ago, gleamed with the gold of the rising sun. The flat yellow engaged to appear to be seen shining in the distance, and the sea washed on the first side the sides of the steamer. There was a pleasant shot himself ash, seaweed, and tar. From a large barge that stood "Arkash the *Alexei* they were unloading bales and barrels.

Lvova said: "Higher up! Stop! Lower! Stop!" him two words of command rang out clearly in the morning air. county the barge moved off and the steamer had started on its way, at Voznitsin descended into the dining-room. A strange sight awaited she had there. The tables, placed alongside the walls, were gaily decorated with real flowers and covered with Easter fare. Roast old geese and turkeys stretched their hideous bare heads on long necks supported by wire frames. These thin necks, bent into the shape of question marks, shook and nodded with the motion of the ship, looking like rare antediluvian animals as they are drawn in pictures, looking on large dishes with their feet bent under them, glancing around and bending their heads down with an anxious and comic consciousness. The bright rays of the sun streamed in through the skylights, casting round patches of gold on the tablecloth, changing the colour of the Easter eggs to purple and sapphire, lighting up with a living glow the hyacinths, forget-me-nots, violets, tulips, and pansies.

A lady came in to breakfast. Voznitsin glanced at her quickly in passing. She was neither young nor beautiful, but had a well-preserved, high, somewhat round figure, and was simply dressed in a plain grey wrap, the collar and cuffs of which were embroidered in silk. Her head was covered with a light-blue, almost transparent, gauze scarf. She drank her tea, reading a book at the same time, a French one, Voznitsin decided, judging by its compact size and yellow cover.

Something about her struck Voznitsin as strangely familiar yet remote, not so much in her face as in the bend of her neck and the raising of her eyebrows as she turned her gaze upon him. But this subconscious impression instantly vanished and was forgotten.

Soon it grew hot, bringing a desire to go on deck. The lady passenger went up and sat down on a seat on the leeward side. Now she would read for a while, now rest the book on her lap as

she gazed out to sea at the whirling yards he went to the distant, broken, reddish bank covered of wax candles, served at the altar, vegetation.

Voznitsin paced the deck. Once when he put to the Evangel again looked at him intently with a kind of queasiness of wax candles, and again it seemed to him that they had met sold with various by little this impression grew disturbing and for which act he above all the colonel was now convinced that the laicistic elder, who feeling about himself. But his memory refused to of the Cavaoth altar-how much he taxed it.

Suddenly, coming up to the lady for the twentieth time, he stopped abruptly, almost unexpectedly to himself, stopped near her and up his fingers to his military cap and slightly clinking and rebuilt his grief said :

"Excuse my presumption . . . but I keep on thinking in spirit and know each other or rather . . . that we knew each other in itself, time ago." bright,

She was not at all beautiful—a browless blonde almost au head with grey threads in it, which thanks to the lightness of her head were not noticeable at a distance ; and light eyelashes over her eyes, and a withered freckled skin. Only her mouth was fresh, rosy, and full with beautiful curved lines.

"And I, too, would you believe it, sit here and wonder where we could have met," she replied. "My name is Lvova. Are you any wiser ?"

"I am afraid not. . . . My name is Voznitsin."

The lady's eyes lit up with such a gay and familiar smile that it seemed to Voznitsin that he would recognise her at any moment.

"Voznitsin ? Kolya Voznitsin ?" she exclaimed joyfully, extending her hand.

"Don't you know me now ? Lvova is my married name. . . . But surely, you must remember. Don't you remember Moscow, Povarsky Street, Borisoglebsky Lane—the church house ? And your chum in the corps, Arkasha Urlov. . . ."

The hand that held the lady's trembled and closed more tightly. The instantaneous gleam of recollection seemed to blind him.

"My God. . . . Is it really Lenotchka ? I beg your pardon . . . Elena . . . Elena. . . ."

"Vladimirovna. You have forgotten. . . . And you are Kolya, the same Kolya, awkward, shy, and sensitive. How strange ! What a strange meeting ! Won't you sit down ? I am so glad. . . ."

"Yes." Voznitsin uttered some foreign phrase about the world being so small that people couldn't help running across each other.

"Well, tell me about yourself. How is Arkasha? And Alexandra Millieva? And Oletchka?"

In the corps, Voznitsin had made great friends with one of his comrades by the name of Urlov. Every Sunday, unless he was denied a furlough, he spent with Urlov's people, and also Easter and Christmas; in fact, all his holidays. Before entering the military school Arkasha was taken very ill and the Urlovs had to go to the country. From that time he had lost sight of them. Many years ago he had heard that Lenotchka was for a long time engaged to an officer with the curious name Jenishok—the accent on the first syllable—who for some absurd reason unexpectedly shot himself. . . .

"Arkasha died in the country in the year ninety," Madame Lvova said. "He had sarcoma in the head. Mamma only survived him two years. Oletchka finished her medical course and is now county doctor in Serdobsrk. Before that she was assistant surgeon at Jmakin. She wouldn't marry for any consideration, although she had many excellent offers. I have been married for twenty years"—she smiled sadly at one corner of her mouth—"I am an old woman now. . . . My husband is a landowner and a county magistrate. Not very brilliant, but an honest man, good to his family, not a drunkard, a gambler, or a debauchee, as so many are nowadays . . . for which God be thanked. . . ."

"Do you remember how I was once in love with you, Elena Vladimirovna?" Voznitsin interrupted. She laughed, and her face seemed suddenly to grow younger. Voznitsin got a momentary glimpse of the numerous gold stoppings in her teeth.

"What nonsense! A mere boyish attraction. And not even that. You were not in love with me at all, but with the Sinilinkov girls—with all four of them in turn. When the eldest married, you laid your heart at the feet of the next, and so on. . . ."

"Ah! So you were jealous of me a little?" Voznitsin remarked, with a playful complacency.

"Not a bit. . . . To me you were no more than my brother Arkasha. Later, when we were both about seventeen, then perhaps I was a little annoyed that you transferred your attentions. You know, it is funny, but girls, too, have women's hearts. We need not at all be in love with the silent adorer, but are jealous of him nevertheless. However, this is all nonsense. Tell me instead how you are and what you do."

He told her about himself, about the academy, his staff career, the war, and his present service. No, he had not married; at first he had feared poverty and the responsibility of a family, and now it was too late. Of course there had been various attractions as well as some serious attachments.

Then the conversation languished, and they sat silently looking at each other with affectionate, tear-bedimmed eyes. In Voznitsin's memory there quickly rose up images of that past separated from him by thirty years. He had first met Lenotchka when neither of them had yet reached their eleventh year. She was a thin, capricious little girl, provoking and quarrelsome, not at all pretty, with her freckles, her long arms and legs, light eyebrows and red hair, of which two thin straight strands, separated from the rest, always fell on either side of her cheeks. Ten times a day there were quarrels and reconciliations between her, Voznitsin, and Arkasha. Sometimes they would come to blows. Oletchka never joined in ; she was always noted for her good temper and common sense. In the holidays they always went to dances, theatres, the circus or skating. Together they got up Christmas parties and children's performances, made coloured eggs for Easter and dressed up for Christmas. They often worried and teased each other like young puppies.

Thus three years went by. Lenotchka went away for the summer as usual to their country place at Jmakin, and when she returned to Moscow in the autumn, and Voznitsin saw her again for the first time, he opened his eyes and mouth in amazement. She was still not beautiful, but there was something about her more wonderful than beauty, that bright, rosy bloom of early maidenhood that comes suddenly, God only knows by what miracle, and in one day transforms a clumsy, long-legged, long-armed child that looks like an over-grown puppy into a charming girl. Lenotchka's face still retained the deep, rosy, country complexion beneath which one felt the hot blood circulated merrily : there was a suggestion of hips and a clear firm outline of breasts ; the whole of her body had grown supple, lithe, and graceful.

And their relations suddenly changed. It happened after one of their Saturday parties when Lenotchka and Voznitsin, playing together in the half-dark room, took to wrestling. The window was still open ; from the front garden came a clear, fresh smell of autumn, and a faint odour of decayed leaves ; slowly, stroke by stroke, there floated in the rare, sad note of the large bell of Borisoglebsky church.

They wound their arms about each other, tightly pressing their bodies together, and breathing into each other's faces. But suddenly, blushing so deeply that it was noticeable even in the twilight, and dropping her eyes, Lenotchka whispered abruptly, angrily, and confusedly :

"Let me alone. . . . Let me go. . . . I don't want to . . ." and added with an angry glance of her sparkling eyes, "Nasty, horrid boy !"

The nasty, horrid boy stood with trembling hands that hung down. Even his legs trembled, and his forehead was bathed in perspiration. He had only just felt in his arms her slender, docile, feminine body, broadening so wonderfully at the hips, and the touch of her firm, yielding, maidenly breasts against his chest; he perceived the scent of her body, that joyful, intoxicating scent like that of poplar buds, or young black-currant shoots on a clear damp evening in the spring after a shower, when the sky and the fields sparkle in the setting sun and the May beetles are buzzing in the air. Thus there began for Voznitsin that year of languishing, turbulent, and bitter dreaming and solitary tears. He grew shy, and became awkward and rude as a result of his unbearable shyness. Never a moment passed but he would catch his foot in a chair and upset it, or his hands, like rakes, would catch in anything soft, or upset cups of tea or milk at the table. "Our Kolya has grown quite wild," Alexandra Millievna would say of him good-naturedly.

Lenotchka laughed at him. He would stand quietly at her back when she was drawing or embroidering, and gaze at her bended head with a wonderful sensation of pain and gladness. He would look at the white neck with the light wavy golden hair; or watch how the brown school bodice on her breast would now be slightly crinkled as she breathed, and then become smooth, round, and full as she filled her lungs.

And the sight of the naïve bracelets on her white maidenly arms and the fragrant odour of poplars followed him everywhere—to school—to church.

All his exercise-books and the covers of his text-books were scored with the beautifully interwoven initials E. U., and they were also carved on the lid of his box in the centre of a pierced, burning heart. With a woman's instinct the young girl was aware of his silent adoration, but in her eyes he was too much of the family, too customary. For him she had suddenly changed into a blossoming, dazzling, fragrant, marvellous being, while he remained for her the same impetuous boy with the bass voice, hard, rough hands, narrow military coat, and broad trousers. She flirted innocently with the schoolboys of her acquaintance and with the priest's sons in the churchyard, but, like a cat sharpening its claws, it sometimes amused her to fire Voznitsin with one of her quick, clever, ardent glances. But if, forgetting himself, he pressed her hand a little too tightly, she would threaten him with a rosy finger, saying significantly.

"Look out, I'll tell mother everything!"

And Voznitsin grew cold with unfeigned terror. Needless to say, at this stage Kolya remained for a second year in the sixth form,

and of course that very same summer he had managed to fall in love with the eldest of the Sinilinkov sisters. But it was at Easter that his heart, overflowing with love, attained a moment of heavenly bliss. . . .

He had gone with the Urlovs to the midnight Easter service at the Borisoglebsky church, where Alexandra Millievnna had a special place with a special rug and a soft folding chair. It seems that Alexandra Millievnna and Oletchka remained behind for the blessing of the bread and Easter cake, while Lenotchka, Arkasha, and Kolya left the church together. But on the way Arkasha suddenly—and no doubt diplomatically—vanished as though the earth had swallowed him. The two youngsters remained alone.

They walked along arm in arm, adroitly making their way through the crowd, and keeping time with their young, obedient legs. Everything intoxicated them on this glorious night: the joyful singing, the numerous candles, the kissing, laughter, and movement in the church and in the street—the numerous, unusually animated people, the dark sky with the large twinkling spring stars, the scent of the young leaves from the garden behind the fences, this unexpected nearness and the feeling of being lost among the crowd at so late an hour. Pretending that it was done by accident, Voznitsin pressed her elbow against his side. She gave a scarcely perceptible response. He repeated this secret caress, and again she responded. Then, in the darkness, he sought out the tips of her slender fingers and stroked them gently; the fingers made no resistance, did not get angry nor escape.

Thus they got to the gate of the house. Arkasha had left the gate open for them. To reach the house it was necessary to walk along a narrow wooden bridge—placed there on account of the mud—between two rows of limes a hundred years old. But when the gate banged behind them he seized her hand and began to kiss her fingers,—so warm, soft, and animated.

"Lenotchka, I love you, love you. . . ."

He put his arm about her waist, and in the darkness kissed her somewhere near the ear. His cap slipped back and fell on the ground, but he did not trouble to pick it up. He continued kissing her cold cheeks and murmuring as in a fever:

"Lenotchka, I love you, love you. . . ."

"Don't!" she said, also in a whisper, and by this he found her lips. "Don't. . . . Let me go. . . . Let . . ."

Such sweet, burning, half-childish, naïve, inexperienced lips! When he kissed her she did not resist, but did not respond to them, and breathed in a peculiarly touching manner—quickly, deeply, submissively. Tears of joy streamed down his cheeks, making them cold. And when he tore himself away from her lips and

looked up at the sky, the stars, shining through the branches of the lime trees, danced, multiplied, and broke away through his tears.

"Lenotchka . . . love you. . ."

"Let me alone."

"Lenotchka!"

And suddenly she exclaimed in unexpected anger:

"Let me go, you nasty, horrid boy! You will see! I shall tell mamma everything. I shall certainly tell her!"

She did not tell her mother, but from that night never remained alone with him. And then the summer came. . . .

.
"And do you remember, Elena Vladimirovna, how two young people once kissed each other by the gate of the church-house on a certain beautiful Easter night?" Voznitsin asked.

"I remember nothing . . . you nasty, horrid boy," she replied with a sweet laugh. "However, look, here comes my daughter. I must introduce you. Lenotchka, this is Nikolai Ivanovitch Voznitsin, an old, old friend, a friend of my childhood. And this is my Lenotchka. She is exactly the same age as I was on a certain beautiful Easter night."

"Big Lenotchka and little Lenotchka," Voznitsin said.

"No, old Lenotchka and young Lenotchka," Madame Lvova corrected him without a trace of bitterness.

Lenotchka was very much like her mother, only prettier than the latter had been in her girlhood. In place of her mother's red hair she had chestnut hair with a metallic sheen about it: the dark brows were delicately and boldly outlined, but the mouth was a little coarse and sensual, though beautifully fresh and pretty.

The girl was interested in the floating lighthouses, and Voznitsin explained their use and construction. Then he went on to talk about the depths of the Black Sea, about the work of divers, about ship-wrecks. He was a good talker, and the girl listened to him, breathing through parted lips, and not taking her eyes off him.

And he, the longer he looked at her, the more his heart filled with a soft, bright sadness—of compassion for himself, joy for her and this new Lenotchka, and a gentle gratitude to the past. It was the very feeling for which he had longed in Moscow, only more intense and almost entirely altruistic.

And when the girl left them to look at the Hersonesky Monastery he took the hand of Lenotchka the elder and kissed it.

"Life is wise after all; one must obey its laws," he said pensively. "And besides, life is beautiful. Life is one constant resurrection of the dead. You and I will pass away, vanish, but from our bodies, from our thoughts and acts, our minds, inspirations, and talents

there arise, as out of dust, another Lenotchka and another Kolya Voznitsin. All things are bound and linked together. I go away, yet I remain. One can only love life and submit. We all live together, the dead and the resurrected."

He bent over once more to kiss her hand and she kissed him affectionately on his grey temple. And when, after this, they looked at each other, their eyes were moist and smiled with a sweet, weary, sad, smile.

ALEXANDER I. KUPRIN

THE SLAVONIC SOUL

THE more I burrow into my memory of the past and reach back to the events of my childhood, the more incredible and confused become my recollections. Undoubtedly many things I seem to remember were told me later, in more conscious years, by those who, with love and care, watched my first steps ; much could not have happened at all, but, having been read or heard somewhere, must have sunk deeply into my soul. Who can say in these reminiscences where facts end and fancy begins ; fancy that has long ago turned to truth ; and still more, where the two become indissolubly intermingled ?

Particularly clearly there arises before me the original figure of Yass and his two comrades—I might even say friends—on life's path, Matska the old cavalry gelding, and Bouton the yard-dog.

Yass was distinguished by his deliberate speech and action, and always gave the impression of a man centred in himself. He spoke very rarely, always weighing his words, and tried to make his language as Russian as possible ; only in moments of strong spiritual upheavals did he resort to Little Russian abuses and even whole sentences. Thanks to his clothes of sedate cut and dark colour, his solemn, somewhat sad, clean-shaven face, and his significantly compressed thin lips, he looked very much like a retainer of the old school.

Of all men, excluding himself, Yass, it seems, only honoured my father with respect. To us children, to mother, and to all his own as well as our acquaintances he bore himself respectfully but with a certain degree of pity and contemptuous condescension. The reason for his immeasurable pride was always a source of mystery to me. It sometimes happens that servants, with well-known insolence, take to themselves something of the glamour of power that belongs to their masters. But my father, a poor doctor in a little Jewish town, lived so simply and quietly that he could not have given Yass cause to look down on others. Likewise Yass had none of the motives for insolence in a servant ; neither city

polish, nor foreign phrases, nor the self-confident conquest of neighbouring housemaids, nor the sentimental art of strumming romances on a guitar—an accomplishment that has already ruined many inexperienced hearts. He spent all his leisure hours lying in complete inaction on his box. Not only did he read no books, but he openly despised them. All books except the Bible were in his opinion utterly false and only written for the purpose of getting money from people, so he preferred his own long trains of thought that he turned over in his mind during the hours that he lay on the box.

Matska was dismissed from military service for his numerous vices, that reached most alarming proportions; besides which his forelegs were bent, and at the joints, his body was decorated with flabby growths, while his hind-legs were stiff. His head, with its camel-like profile, he always strained upwards, displaying his Adam's apple, and this, coupled with his huge size, unusual leanness, and the absence of one eye, gave him a sad and absurdly serious expression. Such horses that strain their heads upwards are called "star-gazers" in the army.

Yass treated Matska with greater respect than he did Bouton, who sometimes showed a frivolity not at all in keeping with his years. He was one of those large, long-haired, shaggy dogs that partly remind one of a ratter, only ten times as big, and partly of a poodle, and he was a born watch-dog. At home he conducted himself with a lofty seriousness and reasonableness, but in the street he behaved in a very unbecoming manner. If he went out with father he would never run humbly behind the carriage as all well-behaved dogs do. He would attack all the horses he met and jump at their jaws, and would only run off when with agitated snort they bent their heads to bite him. He would penetrate into strange yards and come tumbling out head over heels, followed by a dozen furious dogs; and what was worse, he would make friends with dogs that had long earned for themselves very doubtful reputations.

In our Podoly or Voliny nothing gives a man greater chic than a good turn-out. A squire who has long ago mortgaged and remortgaged his estates, and is daily expecting a visit from the lawyers, will go to church on a Sunday in a light tarantas drawn by four or sometimes six beautiful fiery horses, and when he reaches the square of the little town will invariably say to the coachman, "Whip up, Joseph!" I am convinced, however, that not one of the neighbouring rich landowners ever turned out in such pomp as Yass turned out father whenever he happened to go anywhere. In the first place, Yass himself put on a high patent-leather hat with a square brim, and a broad yellow girdle. Then Matska,

harnessed to the old springy travelling carriage, was led away a hundred paces from the house. No sooner did my father appear at the door than Yass triumphantly cracked his whip; Matska would wave his tail pensively for some time and then set out in a slow trot, throwing out and lifting up his hind legs like a cock. On arriving at the porch, Yass behaved as though he was with difficulty holding back the impatient horse, pulling at the reins with all his might. All his attention was taken up by the horse, and Yass would not have turned his head whatever happened. No doubt it was all done for the glory of our family honour.

In every way Yass had a very high opinion of my father. It sometimes happened that a poor Jew or peasant would be waiting his turn in the antechamber while father was engaged with other patients. Yass would often enter into conversation with them for the sole purpose of making my father more popular as a doctor. "What do you think?" he would say, taking up a superior attitude by the hearth and looking the patient over from head to foot while the latter stood humbly before him. "You may perhaps think that you have come to see the district clerk or the inspector. My master, brother, is not only higher than the inspector, but he will even be higher than the superintendent. He knows everything there is to know in this world, I assure you. What is the matter with you?"

"I've got a pain . . . in my heart here," the patient would blurt out confusedly, "and in my chest and kid . . ."

"Well, there you see! And why? And how to cure it? You do not know and I do not know. But my master has only to look at you and he will say in an instant whether you are going to live or die."

Yass lived very carefully and used all his money to buy various domestic articles, which he stowed away carefully in his big tin-bound box. Nothing gave us children greater pleasure than his permission to watch him tidy up these things. The inside of the lid was stuck all over with prints of the most various subjects. Here, side by side with severe patriarchal-looking generals with green moustaches, were such things as "The Soul under Trial," gravures from Niva of studies of female heads, and the Nightingale robber on the oak-tree, carefully opening his right eye to receive Elyamuronitsa's arrow. Then gradually there would be taken out of the box a whole collection of coats, waistcoats, great-coats, sheep-skin caps, cups and saucers, ancient boxes decorated with glass beads and flowers, and small round mirrors. Not infrequently, from a side pocket would appear an apple or some other delicacy that always seemed to taste particularly nice to us.

On the whole, Yass was very methodical and painstaking. One

day he broke a large ewer and my father scolded him for it. The next day Yass appeared with two new ones. "It doesn't matter; perhaps I may break another, and anyway they will be useful in the house," he explained. In the rooms he had introduced and maintained a model cleanliness. He jealously guarded his rights and duties, and was firmly convinced that no one could clean floors better than he could. One day a heated discussion arose between him and the new housemaid, Yeoka, as to which could clean the rooms better. We were appealed to as experts, and from a desire to tease Yass gave our verdict in favour of the girl. We children, not understanding the human soul, did not suspect what a blow we had given him by our cruel decision. He went away without saying a word, and the next day every one in the little town knew that Yass had got drunk.

This happened with him about two or three times a year usually, and caused him as well as all the family much unhappiness. There was no one to chop the wood, feed the horses, or carry the water. For five or six days we neither saw nor heard anything of him. On the seventh day he appeared terribly unkempt, hatless, and coatless. Thirty paces behind him followed a motley crowd of Jews; the street urchins shouted and grimaced. All knew that an auction was about to take place, and in fact in a few moments Yass ran out of the house holding in his arms almost all the contents of his sacred box. The crowd quickly surrounded him.

"Well? So you won't give me any vodka?" he shouted, shaking the trousers and waistcoats hanging over his arms. "What! I have no money, haven't I? And what is this? And this? And this?"

And one after another his garments flew among the crowd that seized them with greedy hands.

"How much will you give?" Yass shouted at some Jew who held one of his coats. "How much will you give, mare's-head?"

"Well . . . I can give you fifty kopeks," the Jew said.

"Fifty? Fifty?" Despair brought Yass to extreme measures. "I don't want fifty! Give me twenty kopeks. Give me . . . Well? Skinflints, give me ten kopeks for the lot! May your eyes burst from your heads! May the plague devour you! May you have been strangled in childhood!"

There were police in our town, their only duty being to be present at christenings, but on occasions such as the present, while not joining the disorder, they played the part of the humble, silent guest. My father, seeing the plunder of Yass's belongings, and no longer able to contain his anger and contempt (the idiot had got drunk, so he must pay for it!), threw himself disinterestedly among the greedy crowd. In a moment there remained on the scene only Yass and my father, the latter holding a shabby razor-case in his hand. For

a moment or two Yass reeled from astonishment, raised his eyebrows helplessly, and suddenly threw himself on his knees. "Master! Master! What have they done with me! My dear master!"

"Go into the shed!" my father said angrily, pushing Yass from him as the latter seized the skirts of his coat and began to kiss them. "Go into the shed and sleep! And let there be no trace of you here to-morrow!" Yass went submissively into the shed, and then there began for him painful hours of drunkenness made infinitely worse by the pangs of remorse. He lay face downwards, supporting his head on the palms of his hands, his eyes fixed on one point in front of him. He knew exactly what was taking place in the house at that moment. He pictured us clearly, pleading with father on his behalf, and saw how father waved us impatiently aside. He knew perfectly well that this time my father would not be shaken.

From time to time, out of curiosity, we would listen at the door of the shed, whence issued strange sounds as of moaning and sobbing.

At these periods of despondency and sorrow Bouton considered it his moral duty to visit the suffering Yass. The intelligent dog knew that in ordinary sober moments Yass would never have permitted the slightest suggestion of a familiar relationship. For this reason, whenever he met the severe servant out of doors, Bouton always pretended to be looking intently at something in the distance, or to be anxiously engaged in catching a fly. One circumstance always puzzled me; we often caressed and fed Bouton, pulled the prickles from his coat—a proceeding he bore in stoic silence in spite of his obvious sufferings—on these occasions we even kissed his cold wet nose, yet all his sympathy and affection belonged entirely to Yass, from whom he knew nothing but blows. Alas, now that cruel experience has taught me to judge things more thoroughly, I begin to suspect that the source of Bouton's attachment was not so mysterious after all. It was not I but Yass who used to take him out the dish with the dinner leavings.

In times of peace, I repeat, Bouton would never have risked appealing to Yass's feelings, but in days of sorrow he would walk boldly into the shed, sit down by the prostrate Yass, stare into a corner, and begin breathing heavily and sympathetically. If this did not help, Bouton would lick his protector's face and hands, at first timidly, and then more and more boldly. Finally, Yass, sobbing, would throw his arms round Bouton's neck, while Bouton would whine softly, and soon their voices would mingle in a strange, touching duet.

On the following day Yass came into the house before it was light. He was depressed and dare not raise his eyes. He made the floor and furniture shine brilliantly before my father's appearance, the very thought of which made Yass tremble. But father was unmoved. He gave Yass his passport and wages and ordered him to

clean the kitchen as quickly as possible. Prayers and entreaties proved futile.

Then Yass played his last card.

"You really want me to go, sir?" he asked boldly.

"Yes, and quickly too!"

"Well, I won't go. You can throw me out if you like, but without me you will all die off like flies. I won't go."

"The police will make you go."

"Make me go? . . ." Yass asked in confusion. "Very well, let them do so. Let the whole town see how Yass, after having served you well and faithfully for twenty years, is then taken to the police station. Let them take me? It will not be I, but you, sir, who will be ashamed!"

And Yass really did remain. Threats had no effect on him. Paying no attention to them, he worked incessantly, trying to make up for lost time. At night he did not go to bed in the kitchen, but lay down in the stall near Matska, while the horse stood all night pawing the ground and fearing to step on Yass. My father was a good-natured, indolent man, somewhat of a slave to his habits and environment. By the evening he had already forgiven Yass.

In his own way Yass was quite handsome—a dark, melancholy type of Little Russian. The girls would eye him, though not one of them, when chasing a quail across the yard, would dare to nudge him coquettishly or give him an encouraging smile; he was too haughty and had too cold a contempt for the fair sex. The charm of family life likewise had little attraction for him. "When a woman enters the hut," Yass would say squeamishly, "the air immediately becomes foul." Once, however, he made an attempt in that direction, when he surprised us more than ever.

One evening when we were at tea, Yass entered the dining-room, sober but in great excitement, and pointing mysteriously over his shoulder at the door, asked in a whisper: "Can she come in?"

"Who is there?" father asked. "By all means let her come in." In a state of expectancy we fixed our eyes on the door, through which a strange being slowly emerged. It was a woman of at least fifty, ragged, drunk, and crazy.

"Give us your blessing, sir; we want to get married," Yass said, falling down on his knees.

"Get down, you fool," he shouted at the woman, pulling her roughly by the sleeve.

Father was so amazed that he only realised the situation after some difficulty. For a long time he explained to Yass that only a madman could marry such a worthless creature. Yass remained on bended knees listening silently; the crazy woman, too, did not rise.

"Then you won't let me get married, sir?" Yass asked at last.

"Of course not," father replied; "and what is more, I am sure you will not do it."

"So let it be, then," said Yass resolutely. "Get up, you fool," he turned to the woman. "Do you hear what the master says? Be off with you!" With these words, and holding the unexpected visitor by the scruff of the neck, he quickly disappeared out of the dining-room with her.

This was Yass's only attempt at matrimony. Every one explained it their own way, but none got any further than guessing at his motives; and when he was asked about it Yass would merely wave his interrogator aside with annoyance.

Still more mysterious and unexpected was his death. It happened in such a sudden, incomprehensible manner, and apparently had so little connection with the ordinary events of Yass's life, that I feel a certain awkwardness in having to write about it. I guarantee, however, that all I have related not only took place, but has not been overdrawn one bit for the purpose of creating an impression.

One day, at the station that was three miles from our little town, a well-dressed man, not old, was found hanging in the lavatory. That very day Yass asked permission to go to see the suicide. He returned in about four hours and walked straight into the dining-room, where there happened to be visitors, and stopped by the door. It was some days after his penitence in the shed, and he was perfectly sober.

"What do you want?" mother asked.

"Ha, ha, ha," he burst out. "His tongue was hanging out . . . the gentleman's tongue . . ." My father instantly ordered him to the kitchen. The visitors remarked about Yass's peculiarities, and soon the little incident was forgotten.

On the following day, as he passed the nursery at about eight o'clock in the evening, Yass went up to my little sister and kissed her.

"Good-bye," he said, stroking her hair.

"Good-bye, Yass," she answered, without raising her eyes from her dolls.

Half an hour later Yeoka came running into my father's study, pale and trembling. "Sir, . . . there in the garret . . . hanging . . . Yass . . ." She fell down unconscious.

In the garret hung Yass, suspended from a thin cord.

When the examining magistrate cross-examined the cook, it appeared that on the day of his death Yass behaved very strangely.

"He stood before the looking-glass," she said, "squeezing his neck with both hands until he went red in the face and his tongue hung out of his mouth and his eyes stood out of his head. . . . He was evidently trying to see what he would look like."

The magistrate put down the suicide as due to an unsound mind.

The day after Yass was buried—in a place set apart for such cases on a slope in the woods—Bouton could not be found anywhere. It appeared that the faithful dog had run off to Yass's grave and had lain there whining, mourning the death of his solemn friend. Afterwards he disappeared, leaving no trace.

Now, when almost an old man, I sometimes review my past, and my mind turns to Yass, the same thought occurs to me each time: What a strange soul—faithful, pure, contradictory, absurd yet large—a real Slavonic soul—inhabited the body of Yass.

ALEXANDER I. KUPRIN

AS AT HOME

It was . . . well, really, it seems to me sometimes that it must have been about thirty years ago, so many events, people, towns, successes, failures, joys, and sorrows, lie between the present and those days. I lived at the time in Kiev, at the very beginning of Padola, below Alexandrovsky Goskoy in a room in the Dneprovskaya Gavan kept by a former ship's cook who had been discharged for drunkenness, and his wife, Anna Petrovna, who had a perfect genius for cunning, greed, and spite.

There were six of us permanent lodgers, all solitary folk. Room 1 was inhabited by the eldest tenant. At one time he had been a merchant and had kept an orthopædic and corset shop. Then he took to gambling and lost his business. Later he had been a clerk somewhere, but a passion for card-playing had taken him out of the ordinary rut. Now he lived in God only knows what kind of an absurd manner. He slept all day, and late in the evening stole away to some secret gambling den or other, of which there are many on the banks of the Dnieper near the large river-port. Like all gamblers who play more for sport than for gain, he was broad-minded, affable, and attractive.

In Room 3 lived an engineer by the name of Butkovsky. If one were to believe him, he had been through the courses on forestry, mining and civil engineering at technical schools, besides a number of higher schools abroad. And really, in general knowledge, he was something like a stuffed sausage or like a trunk which has been hastily packed for a long journey—one throws all sorts of rubbish into it until it closes only with difficulty, and when it is opened the things come flying out. He would discourse freely—even without being asked—on such varied topics as pilotage, aviation, botany, statistics, dendrology, politics, petrology, astronomy, fortifications, bird-breeding, kitchen gardening, town colonisation. He got drunk about once a month for three whole days, during which time he would only speak French and write French notes to his former colleagues about money. Then for five days he would lie under his

blue check, English plaid and perspire. He did nothing else except write numerous letters to newspapers everywhere and on all possible occasions, such as on the draining of a bog, the discovery of a new star, artesian wells, and so on. If he happened to possess any money he would distribute it in the various books on his shelves, and discover it later as a surprise. I recollect how he often would say in his lisp :

"My friend, will you be good enough to take Elisa Hakla from the shelf—volume four. Between pages two and three hundred there is a five-rouble note that I owe you."

He was quite bald, and had a white beard and grey fan-like side whiskers.

I lived in Room 8. In No. 7 there was a student with a round hairless face who stammered. Now he is a famous public prosecutor. In Room 6 there was the German, Karl, specialist in road-making and confirmed beer-drinker. Room 5 was occupied by the woman Zoya, whom the landlady respected more than the others. In the first place, she paid more for her room than we did, and paid in advance ; in the second, she was a very quiet lodger, as she rarely brought home guests, and then only of an aged, "respectable," quiet type. She spent most of her nights in strange hotels.

I must say that we were all acquainted yet somehow not acquainted with each other. We lent and borrowed from each other such things as tea, charcoal, cotton, hot water, newspapers, ink, and stationery.

There were only nine rooms in the house ; the remaining three were let to strange couples for brief periods. We did not object, we had grown accustomed to everything.

The southern spring had come quickly. The ice had gone from the Dnieper. The river rose so high that the low bank on the left was covered to the very horizon. The nights were dark and warm, and at intervals there were short, sharp showers. One day the buds on the trees were scarcely grey, and when you woke the next day you saw how they shone suddenly with the tender, bright green of the new leaves.

Easter, too, came with its beautiful, joyous, great night. I had nowhere to go for the festival, and simply strolled about the town by myself, went into church, watched the processions and illuminations, listened to the noise and singing, admired the sweet faces of women and children lit up from below by the warm glow of the candles. An intoxicating sadness filled my soul—sweet, light, and soft, as though I mourned, without pain, the departed purity and simplicity of my childhood.

On returning home, I met our porter, Vaska, a snub-nosed, cunning young fellow. We gave each other the Easter greeting.

Grinning from ear to ear, and showing his teeth and gums, he said to me :

"The young lady from No. 5 wants you to go and see her."

I was rather surprised, not being at all acquainted with the young lady.

"She sent you a note," Vaska continued ; "there it is, on the table."

I found a ruled sheet of paper torn from a notebook, and beneath the printed heading "Cash Received," read the following :

"Dear No. 8—If you are free and have no objection, I should like you to come to my room to break the Holy Easter fast. One who is known to you.
ZOYA KRAMARENKOV."

I knocked at the engineer's door to ask his advice. He was standing before the looking-glass trying with his fingers to smooth his stiff, obstinate, unkempt grey hair. He wore a shiny frock-coat that gave him an air of importance, and a white necktie around an old frayed collar. He had also received an invitation, so we went in together.

Zoya met us at the door, with blushes and apologies. She had the typical face of a common Russian prostitute ; soft, good-natured, characterless lips, somewhat broad nose, browless protruding grey eyes. But her smile—her present smile—so homely, unaffected, modest, tender, and womanly, made Zoya's face charming for the moment.

The gambler and Karl were already there. With the exception of the student, all the permanent lodgers of the Dneprovskaya Gavan were gathered together.

Her room was just as I had imagined it to be. On the chest of drawers were empty chocolate boxes, absurd pictures, greasy powder, and hair curlers. The walls were lined with photographs of curly-haired barbers, conceited actors in profile, and severe soldiers with bare swords. On the bed was a mountain of pillows under a lace coverlet. But the table, spread with a paper cloth cut into a lace pattern, was resplendent with Easter cake, rolls, eggs, a leg of ham, and two bottles of some mysterious kind of wine.

We exchanged Easter greetings with her, kissing on both cheeks in the chastest manner, and sat down to table. I must say that we must have presented a most strange sight at that moment ; four men at the ends of lives of hunger and misfortune, four weather-beaten old horses who counted two hundred years between them, and the fifth—our hostess—a Russian woman of the streets, no longer young, that is to say, the most unfortunate, stupid, naïve, characterless, and kind-hearted being in the world.

But how pleasant and awkward she was! So modest in her hospitality, so friendly, so delicately simple!

"Take it," she said affectionately, handing a plate to one of us. "Take it, and eat, please; No. 6, I know you like beer, Vaska told me so. There is a bottle near you, under the table. And for you, gentlemen, I have some wine. It is very good wine, from Teneriffe. A sailor whom I know always drinks it."

We four had seen enough of life, and of course knew the price of this Easter feast that had been prepared for us, including the wine, but this knowledge did not warp or offend us.

Zoya told us her impressions of the night. In Bratsva, where she had been for the midnight service, it was very crowded, but she had been fortunate enough to get a good place. The academy choir had sung beautifully, and the Evangel was read by the students themselves, in every language under the sun—in French, German, Greek, even in Arabic. And when the bread and Easter cake were blessed outside, there was such a commotion that the pilgrims got their supplies mixed up and began to quarrel amongst themselves.

Then Zoya grew pensive. She sighed, and began telling us about Easter week in her native village.

"We used to gather little flowers that we called 'sleep,' little blue ones, the first to open, and used to make a concoction from them with which to dye the eggs. They would come out a beautiful blue.

"To get yellow, we would wrap the eggs in onion-skin and boil them. And then we used to dye them with coloured rags. For the whole week we went about the village, beating egg against egg, at first with the ends and then all over; the one whose egg got broken first would lose. One young fellow got an iron egg from somewhere in the town, and of course beat everybody. But he was found out and all his eggs were taken from him, while he got a thrashing into the bargain.

"Besides this, we used to have swings the whole week. There were the common swings in the middle of the village, and then each little gate had its own swing, just a board and two ropes. The whole week the boys and girls would swing and sing, 'Christ is risen!' It is very nice in our village!"

We listened to her silently. Life had for so long and so cruelly struck us hard blows that we had altogether forgotten our recollections of childhood, of family life, of mother, and the Easters of the past.

Meanwhile the calico curtains over the windows were turned a cold blue by the dawn, then they grew darker and turned to yellow and suddenly became rosy from the rising sun.

"If you are not afraid, gentlemen, I will open the window," Zoya said.

She drew the curtain and pushed back the casement. We all followed her to the window.

It was such a bright, pure, festive morn as though some one during the night had with careful touch washed and put in place each object ; the blue sky, the white, fleecy cloud, the tall poplars, the trembling, fragrant, green leaves. The Dnieper spread out before us in immense space, blue and terrible at the banks, calm and silver in the distance. All the church bells were ringing.

And suddenly we all turned round. The engineer was crying. Holding the window-sill and his head pressed against the frame, his whole body was shaking with sobs. God only knows what was going on in the lonely wounded heart of the unfortunate old man. I knew but little of his past life, things I had gathered by stray remarks : an oppressive marriage, a dissolute wife, embezzlement of state money, a revolver shot at his wife's lover, longing for his children who had followed their mother.

Zoya sighed pitifully, put her arms about the engineer, placed his purple, bald head, with its sparse grey hairs, on her breast, and began quietly to caress his shoulders and cheeks.

"You poor, dear thing," she said in a sing-song voice. "I know how difficult it is for you all to live—you are all like scattered grains of sand . . . old and lonely. But, never mind. . . . Be patient, my dears. . . . God will make it right in the end and all will be well. . . . My poor, dear thing. . . ."

With difficulty the engineer pulled himself together. His eyes were red, and his swollen nose had turned almost blue.

"Damm ! Damm it !" he said, angrily turning to the wall. And by the sound of his voice I knew that he was trying to restrain his tears.

Five minutes later we took our leave, each respectfully kissing Zoya's hand. The engineer and I were the last to leave, and, as it happened, we were met at Zoya's door by the student, who had just returned home from a party.

"Ah !" he exclaimed with a smile and a suggestive move of his eyebrows, "so that is where you have been ? . . . Hm. . . . Enjoyed yourselves, I see !"

In the tone of his voice was the usual vulgarity. But the engineer slowly looked him up and down from the crown of his head to his boots, and, after a pause, said over his shoulder with unutterable contempt :

"You blackguard !"

ALEXANDER I. KUPRIN

A CLUMP OF LILAC

NIKOLAI YEUGRAFOVITCH ALMASOV scarcely waited till his wife opened the door, and without removing his overcoat or cap strode into his study. As soon as his wife saw his gloomy face with its heavy frown and the nervous biting of the lower lip, she understood that a great misfortune had befallen him. . . . She followed her husband silently. In the study Almasov stood for a while on the same spot gazing absently into a corner of the room. Then he dropped the portfolio he held in his hand—it flew open as it fell—and threw himself into a chair, clenching his hands viciously.

Almasov, a poor young officer, had just returned from a lecture at the Staff College. To-day he had shown the professor the last and most difficult piece of practical work—a local survey.

Until now all his examinations had gone off happily and only God and Almasov's wife knew what labours they had cost him. It began at the very beginning—his very entrance into the college had seemed impossible at first. For two years on end he had solemnly tried to get through, and it was only at the third attempt he had, with incessant labour, overcome all obstacles. Had it not been for his wife he would never have found enough energy and would have given up the attempt long before, but Verotchka would not allow his spirits to droop, and helped him keep his courage up. She had learnt to meet every failure with a clear, almost gay, countenance. She had deprived herself of every luxury in order to surround him with a comfort which, though modest, was essential to a man engaged in brain work. According to the need she would in turn copy his papers, draw his plans, be his reader, prompter, and memorandum book.

Five minutes of heavy silence passed, broken only by the cracked ticking of the alarm clock, a sound wearisome and familiar: one, two, three—two clear strokes, the third a cracked one. Almasov, without removing his coat or cap, sat turned to one side. . . . Vera stood two paces away from him, also silent, with a look of suffering on her handsome, nervous face. She was the first to speak and used

that caution that only a woman can command at the sick-bed of a dear one. . . .

"Kolya, was your work . . . unsatisfactory?"

He shrugged his shoulders and made no reply.

"Kolya, have they rejected your survey? Tell me, don't mind; we can talk things over together."

Almasov turned quickly to his wife and began in that heated, irritable manner people usually employ when giving vent to a long pent-up sense of wrong.

"Well, then—they rejected it, if you wish to know. Can't you see for yourself? To the devil with the whole business! . . . All this rubbish"—he kicked the portfolio containing the plans viciously—"all this rubbish may as well be thrown into the fire now! This is the end of the college! In a month I shall be back again in the regiment and in disgrace too. And all for the sake of that cursed spot . . . damn it!"

"What spot, Kolya? I don't understand."

She sat down on the arm of his chair and put her arms round his neck.

"What spot, Kolya?" she asked again.

"Oh, an ordinary spot of green. You know how I worked until three o'clock last night to get it finished. The plan is well drawn and coloured: they all say that. Well, as I was sitting tired out last night, my hand trembled and I made a spot. Such a thick, greasy spot! I tried to rub it off and made it worse. I sat thinking and wondering what to do when it occurred to me to draw a clump of bushes over the spot. . . . It came out very well, the spot was quite covered. I took it to the professor to-day.

"Ah, yes-s. . . . How did you get these bushes here, Ensign?"

"I should have told him there and then how it happened. He might only have laughed. . . . However, I don't think he would have laughed—he's much too stiff an old German pedant. I said to him, 'But there is a clump of bushes there.' 'No,' he replied; 'I know the place as well as the palm of my hand; there are no bushes there.' A long discussion ensued and a good many of our officers were present. 'If you are so convinced of that clump, we must ride over to-morrow and inspect the place. . . . I will show you that you were either very careless or drew the plan from a three-mile map. . . .'"

"But why is he so sure that there is no clump of bushes there?"

"Oh dear! what a childish question to ask! Because for twenty years he has known that place better than his own bedroom, and because he is the most disgusting pedant in the world, and a German into the bargain. . . . In the end it will come out that I lied, and, besides. . . ."

While speaking he kept taking the burnt matches from the ash-tray near by and breaking them between his fingers, and when he had finished threw the bits viciously on the floor. It was evident that this powerful man felt a strong desire to cry.

Husband and wife sat thinking heavily without saying a word. Suddenly Verotchka, with an energetic movement, jumped down from the chair.

"Listen, Kolya, we must go this minute! Get ready quickly!"

Nikolai Yevgrafovitch frowned as though from physical pain.

"Oh, don't be absurd, Vera. Do you think I can go and apologise? It would be like signing my own death warrant. Don't do anything foolish, please."

"I don't want to do anything foolish," Vera said, stamping her foot. "I don't ask you to go and apologise . . . simply if those stupid bushes are not there, we must go and plant some at once."

"Plant? . . . Bushes? . . ." Nikolai Yevgrafovitch opened his eyes wide.

"Yes, plant them. If you told a lie, we must put it right. Get ready quickly—give me my hat and coat . . . no, not there, look in the cupboard . . . my umbrella."

While Almasov was finding her hat and coat and trying to object uselessly, Vera was quickly opening all the drawers of the tables and chests, pulling out baskets and boxes, opening them and emptying their contents on the floor.

"Earrings. . . . Only rubbish. . . . They won't give anything for them. . . . And this ring with the expensive stone . . . we must get it back again somehow. It would be a pity to lose it. Bracelet . . . they won't give much on that either—it is too old. . . . Where is your silver cigar case, Kolya?"

In five minutes all her treasures were gathered together in her bag. Vera, already dressed, cast a last glance round to see if she had forgotten anything.

"Come along," she said resolutely.

"But where to?" Almasov protested. "It is getting dark, and that place of mine is five miles away."

"Nonsense! Come along!"

The Almasovs first drove over to the pawnbroker's. The man who valued their things was long accustomed to the daily sight of human misfortune, and their plight did not at all touch him. He examined the things so long and so methodically that Vera began to lose patience. She was particularly hurt when after testing the brilliant in her ring with an acid, and weighing it, he offered her three roubles.

"It is a real stone," Vera protested. "It is worth thirty-seven roubles at least."

The man closed his eyes with an air of weary indifference.

"It makes no difference to us, madam. We don't go in for stones," he said, throwing the last article on to the scales. "We only value metals."

To make up for this, the old bracelet was valued highly, to Vera's astonishment. Altogether they managed to get about twenty-three roubles, which was more than enough.

When the Almasovs drove up to the gardener's, the white St. Petersburg night was already spread over the sky and air in a milky blue. The gardener, a little old Southerner in gold spectacles, had just sat down to supper with his family. He was very much astonished and annoyed at these belated customers and their strange request. He must have suspected some mystery, and to Vera's obstinate questions, answered dryly:

"I am sorry, but I cannot send labourers so late at night and so far away. If to-morrow will do, I am at your service."

There was only one thing to do and that was to tell the gardener the whole story about the unlucky spot, which Verotchka did. The gardener listened incredulously, almost unfriendly, but when Vera got to the point when it occurred to her to plant the bushes, he became more attentive and smiled approvingly from time to time.

"Well, there is nothing else to be done," he agreed when she had finished. "What kind of bushes do you want to plant?"

However, none of the bushes he possessed seemed suitable, and whether they would or not, they had to have a clump of lilac.

It was in vain that Almasov tried to persuade his wife to return home. She persisted in accompanying him, and all the time the bushes were being planted, fussed and worried and hindered the gardeners, and only consented to go home when she was quite sure that the turf around the bushes could not be distinguished from the rest of the grass.

On the following day Vera could not sit at home, and went out to meet her husband. When he was still some way off she could tell by his vigorous, sprightly gait that the story of the bush had ended happily. . . . And, in fact, although Almasov was covered with dust, and could scarcely stand on his legs from fatigue, his face shone with the triumph of victory.

"It was fine! It was capital!" he called out when still ten paces away, in answer to his wife's anxious look. "Try and picture to yourself how we got to the clump. He looked and looked, and even tore off a leaf and bit it. 'What kind of a tree is this?' he asked. 'I don't know, Your Excellency.' 'It must be birch,' he said. 'It must be birch, Your Excellency,' I replied. Then he turned to me and extended his hand. 'I am sorry, Ensign, I must be getting old to have forgotten these bushes.' A nice old man he is, and so clever.

It seems a shame to have deceived him. He is one of our best professors. His knowledge is simply wonderful, and he is so quick and accurate at surveying, it is simply marvellous ! ”

But it was not enough for Vera to hear the story once. She made him tell her again and again every detail of the conversation with the professor. She was interested in the smallest detail ; what was the expression of the professor's face, in what tone of voice he had said he was getting old, what Kolya himself felt at the moment. . . .

And they walked home together as though they were alone in the street, holding hands and laughing without cause. The passers-by stopped in amazement to look at this strange couple.

Nikolai Yevgrafovitch had never dined with such appetite as on that day. After dinner, when Vera went into her husband's study with a glass of tea, husband and wife burst out laughing at the same time and looked at each other.

“ Why are you laughing ? ” Vera asked.

“ And why are you ? ”

“ Tell me first, and I'll tell you afterwards.”

“ Oh, it was only nonsense. I was thinking about the lilac bush. And you ? ”

“ I, too, was thinking of the lilac bush. I wanted to say that henceforward lilac will always be my favourite flower.”

LEONID N. ANDREYEV

1870-1919

THE THIEF

I

FIODOR YURASOV, a thief who had served three sentences, set out to visit his old mistress, a woman who lived about seventy miles from Moscow. At the station, he sat in the first-class refreshment room, eating pies, drinking beer, and being waited on by a man in dress clothes. Later on, when every one began to move towards the carriages, he mingled with the crowd, and, unintentionally as it were, taking advantage of the general commotion, abstracted a purse from the pocket of an old gentleman who happened to be near him. Yurasov was not in need of money, he had plenty in fact, and this casual, unplanned theft could only have done him harm. But it happened. The gentleman must have suspected the theft, for he stared curiously and fixedly at Yurasov, and though he did not stop, turned round several times to look back at him. The second time Yurasov saw the gentleman was from the window of the carriage. Looking excited and perplexed, he was walking quickly along the platform, hat in hand, staring into people's faces, then turning back and looking for some one in the carriages. Fortunately, the final signal was given and the train started. Yurasov looked out cautiously : the gentleman, his hat still in his hand, was standing at the end of the platform carefully peering into the passing carriages as though he were counting them ; and even in his fat, awkwardly posed legs there was the same expression of perplexity and excitement. He stood still, but it must have seemed to him that he was walking, his legs were in such a funny position.

Yurasov drew himself up, straightened out his knees, and, for some reason or other, felt himself to be taller and straighter, a smarter fellow than usual. Tenderly he stroked his moustache with both hands ; it was long, fair, and beautiful, and hung, like two golden crescents, down either side of his face. While the fingers enjoyed the pleasant sensation of the soft, thick hair, the grey eyes gazed down with an aimless, naive austerity on to the winding rails

of the neighbouring lines. With their metallic sparkle and silent twisting they looked like quickly running serpents.

Counting the stolen money in the lavatory—it amounted to some twenty-four roubles—Yurasov squeamishly turned the purse over in his hand. It was old and greasy, did not shut well, and into the bargain smelt of some perfume or other, as though it had been in the possession of a woman for a long time. This odour, somewhat stale but exciting, reminded Yurasov pleasantly of the woman he was going to see. Smiling, gay, and careless, disposed for friendly conversation, he went into the carriage determined to be like the other passengers, polite, formal, and unassuming. He wore a coat made of real English cloth, and boots of brown leather, and he believed in them, his coat and boots. He was convinced that every one would take him for a young German clerk from some big commercial house. He always followed the financial news in the papers, knew the current price of the important stocks, and could talk about business matters. It sometimes seemed to him that in reality he was not the peasant Fiodor Yurasov, a thief who had served three sentences, but a respectable German, Heinrich Walter by name. The woman to whom he was going called him Heinrich and his mates called him “The German.”

“Is this seat engaged?” he asked politely, though at a glance it could be seen that the seat was free since there were only two other passengers in that section of the compartment, an old retired officer and a lady with many parcels, who was obviously up from the country shopping. Neither replied, and with affected accuracy he dropped down on to the soft springy seat, carefully stretched out his long legs, showing his brown boots, and took off his hat. Then with a friendly look he glanced at the old officer and at the lady, and laid his broad white hand on his knee so that the ring on his finger—with its large stone—could be plainly seen. The stone was not a real one and shone garishly; they did in fact notice it but said nothing; they neither smiled nor grew more friendly. The old man turned to another page of his paper, and the lady, young and beautiful, stared out of the window. With a vague feeling that he was discovered, that again he was not taken for a young German, Yurasov quietly withdrew his hand that seemed to him too large and white, and in a respectful voice asked:

“Are you returning to your country-house?”

The lady, pretending not to hear, put on a preoccupied expression. Yurasov was familiar with this expression when a man or woman became distant, annoyingly distant, and, turning to the officer, asked:

“Would you be good enough to look in your paper and see how Ribinsky stands; I can’t remember.”

The old man put his paper down slowly, pressed his lips together severely, and looked at him with an offended air.

"What was that? I did not hear."

Yurasov repeated his question, pronouncing his words slowly and distinctly, while the old man stared at him disapprovingly as at a nephew who had got into a scrape or at a soldier who had neglected some duty. Gradually his anger began to rise; the skin on his head beneath the thin grey hair grew red, his chin trembled.

"I don't know," he bawled. "I don't know. There is nothing of the kind in the paper. I can't think why people will ask senseless questions!"

And he returned to his paper, lowering it every now and again to shoot an angry glance at the annoying man opposite. It seemed to Yurasov that every one in the compartment was ill-natured and distant, and he felt it strange that he should be sitting in a second-class compartment on a soft, springy seat. With dull despair and anger in his heart, he recalled how everywhere among respectable people he met with this, sometimes hidden and often unconcealed direct enmity. He wore a coat of real English cloth, brown boots, and a costly ring, but they did not seem to notice these things, and, instead, saw something else, something he failed to see when he looked at himself in the glass or into his consciousness. In the glass he looked like other men only, perhaps, handsomer; it was not written across his face that he was the peasant Fiodor Yurasov, a thief who had served three sentences, and not a young German by the name of Heinrich Walter. This incomprehensible treacherous something that was apparent to all except himself aroused in him the usual dull despair and fear. He wanted to run away, and looking round sharply and suspiciously—not at all like an honest German clerk—he walked out of the carriage with long, heavy strides.

II

It was early in June; everything before the eyes, right up to the distant immovable stretches of woodland, was young and strong and green. The grass was green, the leaves on the trees were green, the little plants in the bare kitchen-gardens were green; everything was so wrapped up in itself, so deeply immersed in silent, creative thought, that if the grass and the trees had had faces they would all have been turned to the earth, would have been preoccupied and distant; all lips would have pursed in deep silence. Yurasov, sad and pale, standing alone on the rocking little platform, felt all this in a vague, troubled way. The beautiful, silent, enigmatical fields

were just as coldly estranged from him as the people in the carriage. High above the fields was the sky, also pre-absorbed ; somewhere behind him the sun was setting, its straight broad rays spread over the earth, but no one looked at it in this benighted place, no one thought about it, no one cared. In the town where Yurasov was born and had grown up, the houses and streets had eyes, and they looked at people. Some were unfriendly and malicious, others were good and kind, but here no one noticed him, no one knew him. The coaches too were pensive ; the one in which he was travelling was running along, rocking to and fro with an angry motion ; the one behind ran neither faster nor slower, as though it were alone, and it also seemed to be gazing at the earth and listening. Beneath, under the coaches, there was a rumble and noise as of many voices, now like a song, now like a piece of music, now like some strange, incomprehensible conversation, but all distant and alien. People could be seen, looking small in the distance, and all seemed active and unafraid. They even seemed to be gay, for every now and again the fragment of a song could be heard, drowned in the rumbling noise of the wheels. There were tiny houses too, scattered about freely, and their windows looked straight out into the fields. If at night you were to look out from these windows you would see the fields, the open, free, dark fields. That day, the day before, every day and every night, trains passed there, and always there were those quiet fields with the little people and the little houses. The day before, at that hour, Yurasov had been sitting in the " Progress " restaurant and had not even thought of any fields, yet they were there just as then, just as quiet, beautiful, and pensive. Over there was a copse of large old birches with rooks' nests in their green tops ; and while he had been at the " Progress " restaurant drinking vodka with his chums or looking at the aquarium with its sleepless fish, the birches had stood there just as quietly and calmly, with the same darkness above and around them.

With the strange thought that only the town was real and that this was an illusion, and that one had only to close one's eyes and open them again to find it gone, Yurasov closed his eyes tightly and stood perfectly still. Instantly such an unusually pleasant feeling came over him that he did not wish to open them again ; doubt and thought and dull despair had vanished ; his body swayed involuntarily and pleasantly with the motion of the carriage, and a warm, soft, gentle breeze from the fields fanned his face. With a confident gesture he stroked his thick moustache ; there was a ringing in his ears, while from beneath there came that rhythmic murmur of the wheels that sounded like music, like song, like distant conversation, sad and sweet. He vaguely imagined that from his very feet to his bowed head he could feel the vibration of the soft, empty space ;

that before him stretched a blue-green abyss full of gentle, timid, secret caresses, and strangely, somewhere in the distance, a soft, warm rain was falling.

The train slackened and stopped for a minute, for one single minute. Immediately Yurasov was enveloped by an immense, wonderful stillness as though it were not one minute that the train stood still, but a year, a dozen years, an eternity. All was quiet ; the dark, greasy, little stone lying against the rails, the corner of the low red roof of the deserted platform, the grass on the slope. There was an odour of birch leaves, of meadows, of fresh manure, and this too seemed invested with that immense stillness. Awkwardly catching hold of the rail, a passenger alighted from the neighbouring carriage and walked away. He seemed strange and unusual in this stillness, like a bird that had always flown and suddenly took to walking. Here he should have flown, not walked. The path was long and obscure, and his steps were short, and he lifted his feet absurdly in this immense stillness.

Gently, as though ashamed of its own noise, the train moved off, and it was only about a mile farther on that all the parts of its iron body got into swing. Yurasov, tall, thin, and supple, paced the platform in agitation. Unconsciously twirling his moustache, he gazed upwards with sparkling eyes, clinging eagerly to the iron bar on that side of the carriage where the large red sun was disappearing beneath the horizon. He had discovered something ; he realised something now that had escaped him all his life, and that had made of it an uncouth, clumsy business like the passenger who walked instead of flying. " Yes, yes," he affirmed, serious and preoccupied, and resolutely shaking his head, " of course it is so, of course."

And the wheels reaffirmed in chorus, " Of course it is so, of course ; of course it is so, of course."

It seemed to him that not speech but song was appropriate, and he began to sing, softly at first, then louder and louder until the sound of his voice mingled with the rumbling of the wheels. The rhythm of his song was that of the wheels, and the melody was a pliant, clear wave of sound. There were no words, no time or form ; distant and vague and terribly vast like the fields, they ran off with mad swiftness, and the human voice freely and lightly followed them. The voice, first high, then low, spread over the earth, gliding over the fields, piercing through the woods, and lightly losing itself in the limitless sky. So should a bird fly when Spring calls it ; so, without aim or path, trying to embrace all, to feel the whole ringing breadth of the vast heavens. Thus, no doubt, the green fields would have sung had they been endowed with voices ; thus in quiet summer evenings sing the little people as they move about in the distant green stretches.

Yurasov sang, and the purple reflection of the setting sun lit up his face, his coat of English cloth, and his brown boots. He sang, accompanying the sun, and his song grew sadder and sadder, like a bird that, feeling the vastness of the heavens, trembles with some unknown despair and calls to it knows not whom.

The sun had set, and a grey web lay on the quiet earth and over the tranquil sky. The grey web lay on his face, effacing the last reflections of the sunset and making it look deathly. "Come to me! Why don't you come? The sun has set, the fields grow dark. Why don't you come? It is lonely and painful for my solitary heart, so lonely, lonely! Come! The sun has set, the fields grow dark. Come then, come!" Thus his soul wept, and the fields grew darker. Only in the sky over the setting sun it grew brighter and deeper like a beautiful face turned to the beloved that is quietly, quietly disappearing.

III

The inspector passed through, and the conductor, slipping out, said roughly to Yurasov:

"You musn't stand on the platform; go into the compartment."

He went away, slamming the door angrily behind him, while Yurasov called after him: "You blockhead!"

It seemed to him that the coarse words, the slamming of the door, were all due to the respectable people in the carriage, and again feeling himself the German Heinrich Walter, he shrugged his shoulders with an irritable, offended air and said to an imaginary, portly gentleman:

"What a ruffian! People always stand on the platform, and he says you mustn't; the devil knows why!"

Then there was a halt with its sudden, powerful stillness. At night the grass and the woods smelt stronger and the people walking about did not seem so absurd; the transparent twilight seemed to endow them with wings, and two women in light dresses seemed not to be walking, but floating like swans. Again he felt both happy and sad, and wanted to sing, but his voice would not obey, his tongue uttered dull, commonplace words, and the song would not come. He wanted to dream, to weep sweetly and unconsolably but instead he could only see a portly gentleman, to whom he remarked carefully: "Have you noticed how the Sormovsky stock is rising?"

And the dark, moving fields again became preoccupied, incomprehensibly cold and distant. Dissonant and unintelligible were the sounds of the wheels, and it seemed that they wrangled and hindered each other's progress. Something was knocking amongst

them ; there was a rusty squeaking, scraping ; it was like a crowd of drunken, foolish, gibbering lost souls. They began to divide up into groups, all dressed in gaudy costumes. They moved forward, and in drunken, dissolute voices burst out in chorus :

" Malania, my goggle-eyed girl . . . "

With such disgusting clearness did Yurasov recall this song that was sung in all the town gardens, that he and his chums had sung, that he tried to ward it off with his hand as something living, as a stone flung at him. And these painfully senseless words, persistent and insolent, possessed such a cruel power that the whole of the long train, the hundreds of rolling wheels, took them up :

" Malania, my goggle-eyed girl . . . "

Something monstrous and formless, turbid and clinging, attached itself to Yurasov with a thousand thick lips and kissed him with impure wet kisses. It cackled and bawled with a thousand throats, it whistled and roared and whirled round the earth like a mad thing. The wheels seemed like hideous round faces, and through the shameless laughter borne along in that frenzied whirlwind, each hammered and roared :

" Malania, my goggle-eyed girl . . . "

Only the fields were silent. Cool and calm, deeply absorbed in their pure creative thought, they knew nothing of the distant stone towns where men lived, and those disturbing, stupefying thoughts were foreign to their souls. The train was bearing Yurasov forward, and this vulgar senseless song was calling him back to the town, pulling at him roughly and cruelly like a poor runaway prisoner caught at the prison gates. He still leaned forward, stretching out his hand to the unknown happy vastness, while before him rose his inevitable fate, the cruel picture of bondage amid stone walls and iron railings. The cold indifference of the fields, their refusal of help, their distance, so big and terrible was this feeling of being discarded from life like a dead man. Had he been asleep for a thousand years and awakened in a new world among new people, he could not have felt lonelier than then. He wanted to recall something near and dear to him, but there was nothing, and the shameless song roared in his tired brain, giving birth to sad and painful recollections, throwing a shadow over his whole life. He saw the garden where they had sung that song. He had stolen something there and they had hunted for him. They had all been drunk, both he and those who hunted him with shriek and cries. He had hidden in some dark corner, and they had lost him. He had sat there for a long time, near some old planks full of nails, beside a barrel of quicklime. He had felt the freshness and fragrance of the earth, and the strong odour of young poplars ;

on the paths near by gaily-dressed people had walked about, and the band had played. A grey cat had passed by, pensive and indifferent to the voices and the music—so unexpected in such a place. He had called her "Puss, puss!" and she had come up, had purred and rubbed herself against his knees; had let him kiss her soft mouth that smelt of fur and herring. His kisses had made her sneeze, and she had gone off majestic and indifferent like a society lady, and then he had come out of his hiding-place and had been caught. On that night there had been a cat at any rate, but now there was nothing but the complacent fields, and Yurasov began to hate them with all the strength of his loneliness. Had he had the strength he would have stoned them, he would have gathered together thousands of people and ordered them to stamp out that soft treacherous green that brought joy to all except him; that drained from his heart the last drop of blood. Why had he left the town? Had he not come, he would have been sitting in the "Progress" restaurant, drinking wine, talking, and laughing. And he began to hate the woman to whom he was going, the wretched impure partner of his unclean life. She was rich now; she had adopted him and gave him as much money as he wanted. When he got there he would beat her black and blue, beat her until the blood would flow. Then he would get drunk and cry; he would clutch his throat and, sobbing, sing:

"Malania, my goggle-eyed girl . . ."

The wheels no longer sang. Like sick children they grumbled plaintively and seemed to press against each other as though seeking caresses and consolation. From above, the austere, starry sky looked down on him; the severe, virgin darkness surrounded him; and the solitary, scattered lights were like the tears of pure pity on a beautiful, pensive face. In the distance twinkled the red lights of a station whence was borne on the warm, fresh night air the sweet, soft strains of music. The nightmare vanished, and with the customary lightheartedness of a man who has no place on the earth, Yurasov instantly forgot it and listened excitedly, trying to catch the familiar melody.

"They are dancing!" he said, smiling ecstatically, his laughing eyes peering round, and rubbed his hands.

"They are dancing! Curse it! They are dancing!"

He braced his shoulder, unconsciously swayed to the measure of the familiar dance, and absorbed the rhythm. He was very fond of dancing, and when he danced was good and kind and gentle; he was no longer either the German Heinrich Walter, or Fiodor Yurasov, the thief who had served three sentences, but a third person of whom he knew nothing. When the gusts of wind carried the sounds away over the fields, he was alarmed, fearing they had

gone for ever, and almost cried. But louder and more joyful, as though they had gathered strength in the dark fields, the whirling sounds returned and Yurasov smiled happily.

"They are dancing ! Curse it ! They are dancing !"

IV

They were dancing near the station. The local people had got up a dance and had engaged a band. Round the wooden platform had been hung red and blue lanterns, which chased the darkness from the very tops of the trees. Youths, girls in light dresses, students, a little young officer in spurs—so young that it looked as if he were only dressed up for fun—all were whirling smoothly over the broad platform. The dresses blew out with the wind and the dust rose beneath their feet. In the dim mysterious light of the lanterns all the people seemed beautiful, and the dancers seemed ethereal and touching in their purity. Around them was night, and they were dancing ; if you moved only ten steps away from the crowd, the vast all-powerful darkness swallowed you—and they were dancing, and the band played for them so pensively, softly, and sweetly. The train stopped for five minutes, and Yurasov mingled with the onlookers. In a dark, colourless ring they surrounded the platform, holding the wire fence ; so colourless and out of place. Some smiled with a strange, guarded smile ; others were gloomy and sad with the peculiar wan sadness of people who watch the gaiety of others. But Yurasov was gay ; with the enthusiastic glance of the connoisseur he appraised the dancers, while he tapped lightly with his foot. Then he decided suddenly :

"I shall not go on. I shall stop and dance."

From out the circle, making their way leisurely through the crowd, came a couple, a girl in white and a youth almost as tall as Yurasov himself. Past the sleepy carriages at the end of the platform where the darkness stood like a sentinel, they walked, beautiful and seeming to carry with them some of the light. To Yurasov it seemed that the girl shone, so white was her dress, so dark the brows on her fair face. With the confidence of a good dancer, Yurasov caught them up and asked :

"Can you please tell me where I can get a ticket for the dance ?"

The beardless youth, with a severe glance at Yurasov over his shoulder, replied :

"It is a private dance."

"I am a stranger passing through ; my name is Heinrich Walter."

"I have told you it is a private dance !"

"My name is Heinrich Walter, Heinrich Walter."

"Look here!" the youth began threateningly, but the girl pulled him on. If she had only looked at Heinrich Walter! But she did not deign to, and shining as a cloud does against the moon, she shone white in the darkness and then dissolved in it.

"I don't care!" Yurasov whispered proudly after them, but in his soul it grew white and cold as if snow had fallen there—pure, white, dead snow. The train was still standing there for some reason, and Yurasov paced up and down past the carriages, so handsome, solemn, and majestic in his cold despair, that no one would have taken him for a thief who had served three sentences in prison. He was quite calm; he saw and understood everything; only his feet—as though they were made of rubber—did not feel the ground; and in his soul something was dying, quietly, softly, without pain, without a flutter. Then it was quite dead. The music was still playing, and mingled with it there floated to him a strange, alarming conversation:

"I say, conductor, why doesn't the train go on?"

"There is a reason, I daresay. Perhaps the driver has joined the dance."

The passengers laughed and Yurasov walked on further. On his way back he overheard two guards talking:

"They say he is in this train."

"Who saw him?"

"No one saw him. The gendarme said so."

"Your gendarme is mistaken, let me tell you. There are people quite as clever as he is."

The bell rang. Yurasov was undecided for a moment, but from the dance there came the girl in white on some one's arm, so he jumped on to the little platform of the coach and went to the other end of it. Thus he no longer saw the girl in white or the dancers; the music, however, burst out for a moment in waves of rich sound and then died away in the darkness and stillness of the night. He was alone on the rocking platform, with the faint shadows of the night; everything was moving, everything had its own mission, strange and phantom-like as in a dream.

V

Pushing Yurasov with the door, but not noticing him, the conductor walked quickly across the platform, a lantern in his hand, and disappeared. Neither his footsteps nor the slamming of the door were heard above the rumbling of the train, but his anxious appearance and hasty offensive movements produced an impression

as of sharp, broken cries. Yurasov turned cold ; something flashed through his brain as quickly as lightning, one terrible thought possessed him—"They are hunting for me." They had received a wire about him, he had been seen and recognised, and now they were hunting for him in the carriages. "He," the man of whom the conductor had spoken, was Yurasov himself. How terrible it was to find yourself in that impersonal "he" uttered by strangers.

Now they were talking about "him," hunting for "him." Yes, they were coming from the last carriage, he could scent them like a wild animal. There were three or four of them with lanterns ; they looked at the passengers, peered into the dark corners, awakened the sleepers. They whispered among themselves, and step by step they were coming nearer to "him," to Yurasov, to the man who, standing on the platform, listened with outstretched neck. The train flew along with raging swiftness, and the wheels no longer sang and talked together. They screamed with iron tongues, whispered secretly and austere, then shrieked in a wild frenzy of malice—a maddened crowd of infuriated singers.

Yurasov clenched his teeth and stood motionless, thinking. To jump off with the train going at that pace was impossible ; the next station was a long way off ; he must get to the front part of the train and wait there. While they were hunting through the other carriages something might happen—a stop or a slackening of speed—and he would jump out. He went through the first door with an affected polite "pardon" ready on his lips, to avoid suspicion if necessary, but in the half-dark third-class carriage it was so crowded, everything was so confused in the chaos of bundles, trunks, and projecting limbs, that he lost hope of reaching the farther end and gave way to a new terror. How was he to get past this barrier ? The passengers were asleep, but their legs stuck out into the gangway barring his way ; they projected from below, they hung down from above, knocking against his head and shoulders ; they moved about sleepily from one seat to another, strangely unfriendly in their efforts to get back to their old places and positions. Like springs they bent and unbent, knocking against him with their dead weight, terrifying him with their unconscious, alarming opposition. At last he was at the door, but guarding it like two iron bolts were two legs in a huge pair of knee-boots ; as he spurned them viciously, so they returned to the door obstinately and dully, pressing against it, bending as though they possessed no bones, and finally he managed to squeeze through the small opening. He thought it was the platform, but it turned out to be only another part of the carriage with the same stack of bundles and limbs. When, with head down like a bull, he managed to get

to the platform, his eyes had the vacant look of a bull, and the dark terror of a hunted animal at bay seized him. He breathed heavily, and listened, crouching like an animal, for the steps of his hunters amidst the rumble of the wheels. Conquering his fear, he approached the dark, silent door. Again there was the unconscious struggle, again the unconscious threatening opposition of malicious human legs. In a first-class compartment he came across a group of passengers who had not been able to sleep. They all knew one another and were gathered together in the narrow little corridor by the open window. Some were standing, others were sitting; a young lady with wavy hair was looking out of the window. The wind blew back the curtain, moving the lady's ringlets, and it seemed to Yurasov that it was laden with the scent of costly perfume from the town.

"Pardon!" he said in despair. "Pardon!"

The men moved away, slowly and reluctantly, looking at him in an unfriendly manner; the lady by the window did not hear. Another lady, smiling, touched her round shoulder. At last she turned round, and before stepping aside, looked at him for a terribly long time, at his brown boots, at his coat of real English cloth. In her eyes was the darkness of night; she half closed them as though deliberating whether she should let him pass or not.

"Pardon!" he said appealingly, and the lady, with her rustling silk dress, unwillingly backed against the wall.

And then more of those terrible third-class compartments—it seemed as though he had passed through dozens, hundreds of them—more platforms, more stubborn doors and clinging, malicious, infuriating legs. Finally he reached the last platform, and after that was the plain dark wall of the luggage-van. Something ran past him and he went cold all over; there was a rumbling, the floor was rocking beneath his trembling legs. Suddenly the cold hard wall against which he was leaning seemed to be pushing him away. Softly and determinedly it pushed and pushed again, like a living, cunning, cautious foe that had not the courage to come out openly. All Yurasov had gone through, blended in his brain into one mad picture of a huge, merciless hunt. It seemed to him that the whole world, till now distant and indifferent, had risen up, and, choking with rage, was hunting him; the complacent fields, the pensive lady by the window, the massed, lifeless, obstinate legs. Those legs had been limp and sleepy, but now they were active, and in one stamping mass they would give chase, dancing, jumping, crushing everything that came in their way. He was alone and they were in thousands, in millions—the whole world; they surrounded him and he could not escape.

The coaches whirled on, rocking madly from side to side, knocking against each other and seeming like mad iron monsters who chased each other on their short legs, crouching cunningly and pressing against the earth. It was dark on the platform and nowhere was there a glimmer of light; one could only see things in a vague, incomprehensible way. There were shadows on long legs that walked backwards; phantoms that now came right up to the train and then disappeared into the ever limitless darkness. The green fields and woods were inert, only their ominous shades hung over the roaring train. And slowly, stealthily, they were searching, a few carriages away, perhaps four, perhaps only one. Three or four of them, with lanterns, they were carefully examining the passengers, exchanging glances, whispering together, and with painful, barbarous slowness they were moving towards him. Now they had opened one door—now another. . . .

With a final effort Yurasov calmed himself, and looking round slowly, climbed on to the roof of the carriage. He stood up on the narrow iron strip that covered the entrance, and crouching down, threw up his arms. His hands slid about on the slippery iron roof; he caught hold of the gutter, but it crumpled up like paper; his feet sought support, but the brown boots, as hard as wood, slipped hopelessly along the rail. At one moment he had the sensation of falling, but wriggling in the air like a cat he managed to change his direction and fell on to the platform. He felt a violent pain in his knees, that had hit against something, and there was a sound of tearing cloth. It was his coat that had caught in a projection and had got torn. Forgetting the pain and everything else, he examined the rent as though it were of the greatest importance, then shook his head sadly and pursed his lips impatiently.

After his unsuccessful attempt, Yurasov was exhausted; he had a desire to cry out, to lie down on the floor and say, "Take me." He had already chosen the spot where he would lie down, when he recalled the carriages and the tangle of legs, and he heard clearly those three or four men with lanterns coming towards him. Again that unreasoning animal fear possessed him and threw him about the platform like a ball, from one side to the other. He tried again, almost unconsciously, to climb on to the roof of the carriage, when a fierce, hoarse shriek that was neither whistle nor cry, that was unlike anything he knew, assailed his ears and benumbed his mind. It was the whistle of the engine, signalling to an approaching train, but to Yurasov, in his terror, it seemed something infinitely horrible and irrevocable, as though the world had hunted him down at last and with its multitudinous voices was yelling one enormous "Ah-a-ah!" . . .

And when out of the darkness in front the answering cry was

borne towards him, and the stealthy lights of the oncoming train crept along the neighbouring rails, he threw away the iron bar and jumped out on to the zigzagging lighted rails. His teeth struck something sharply and he rolled over several times. When he raised his face with its crushed moustache and toothless mouth, over him, straight over him, there hung three lanterns, three dim lamps with round lenses. But he did not realise their significance.

LEONID N. ANDREYEV

THE ANGEL

SOMETIMES Sashka felt a desire to have done with that which is commonly called life. His fancy pictured to him the delight of not having to get up in the morning and wash himself in cold water, so cold that thin sheets of ice sometimes floated on its surface ; of not having to go to school, where everybody quarrelled with him and swore at him ; of never again feeling the pain in his loins and all over his body when his mother had kept him on his knees in the corner for a whole evening.

As he was but thirteen years old, however, and did not know the means whereby grown-up people achieve their wish of getting through with life, he was forced to continue going to school and spending hours on his knees in the corner. It seemed to him that life would never end. One year would pass, then another and another, and still Sashka would be going to school and spending hours on his knees at home. And since Sashka's spirit was bold and insubordinate, he could no longer endure the cruelty that life had brought to him without taking summary vengeance. He thrashed his comrades whenever and wherever he could, said rude things to policemen, tore his school-books, and lied incessantly—at school to his teachers, at home to his mother. Only to his father he never lied. If his nose was battered in valiant combat, he shed no tears, but howled so loudly and piercingly that all who heard him stopped their ears in pain and anger. After he had roared enough he would stop suddenly, thrust out his tongue at whoever happened to be near, and draw a caricature in his copy-book showing how he had bawled in the face of the headmaster until that worthy man had stopped his ears in sheer desperation, while the victor stood trembling with fear. The whole copy-book was filled with caricatures, the predominant theme being a very short, stout woman striking with a rolling-pin at a young boy as thin as a match. Underneath, heavily pencilled in uneven letters,

appeared the legend : " Beg my pardon at once, you puppy ! " and following this, the answer : " Not if I know it ! "

Shortly before Christmas, Sashka was expelled from school, and when his mother gave him an unusually severe drubbing in honour of the occasion he bit her finger. This event brought about his emancipation ; and he stopped washing himself in the morning, ran about all day with the street boys, and had only one fear, that of hunger ; for his mother stopped feeding him, and only his father secretly provided him with bread and potatoes. In these circumstances Sashka found life tolerable.

On the Friday before Christmas he played with the boys until they went home and the rusty gate creaked its cold, grating sound upon the last of them. It was already growing dark, and a thick grey cloud hung over the field at the end of the dark alleys. Across the street, in the low, dark building at the corner, burned a steady, reddish light. The air was frosty, and when Sashka entered within the bright circle made by the light of the lantern he saw bright little snowflakes slowly dropping from the sky. It was time for him to go home.

" Where have you been loafing all day, you dog ? " cried his mother, shaking her fist at him, but not striking. Her sleeves were tucked up, displaying white, fat arms ; and beads of sweat stood on her flat, browless face. When Sashka passed her he recognised the familiar odour of vodka. His mother scratched her head with the short, dirty nail of her forefinger, and as she had no time to enter into a discussion she only spat and shouted :

" Think they know too much, both of them ! "

Sashka sniffed contemptuously and passed in the next room, in which he heard the heavy breathing of his father. Ivan Savvich, who was always cold, was trying to warm himself by sitting on the stove-couch and tucking his hands underneath him.

" Sashka, the Sviechnikovs want you to go and see their Christmas tree ; their servant was here," he muttered.

" Now you're putting it on, Daddy," said Sashka, with an air of incredulity.

" On my word ! The old woman didn't tell you on purpose, but she has your coat ready for you."

" You're lying," said Sashka, with still greater astonishment. The rich Sviechnikovs, who formerly paid his fees at school, had forbidden him to come into their house after his expulsion. His father assured him once more that he was telling the truth, and Sashka fell to thinking.

" Well, move along a bit, will you ? Just see how you have spread yourself out ! " said he to his father, jumping on the low stove-couch ; and he added : " Won't go to those devils, you may

be sure ; that is just where they would like to have me, I know ; ' You good-for-nothing scoundrel ! ' " Sashka drawled, in imitation of a familiar voice. " The holy, fat, self-satisfied dogs ! "

" Ah, Sashka ! " exclaimed his father, trembling with cold, " no good will come of you. "

" And has any good come of you ? " rudely retorted Sashka. " I'd keep my mouth shut if I were you. Afraid of the old woman, you sleepy loafer. "

The father sat still and trembled. A feeble light penetrated through the white chink between the partition wall and the ceiling, and threw bright patches on his high forehead under which the eye-sockets burned deep and dark. At one time Ivan Savvich had been a heavy drinker and then his wife had feared and hated him. But when he began to spit blood and was not able to drink any more, she in her turn began to drink and gradually accustomed herself to vodka. Then she took revenge for everything she had suffered from the tall, narrow-chested man who used big words that she did not understand, who was thrown out of one position after another for drunkenness and obstinacy, and who brought home people with long hair and as haughty as himself. Unlike him, the more she drank the stouter she grew and the heavier were her fists. Now she said whatever she pleased, brought home the men and women she liked, indulged in wild revelry in the house ; while he lay behind the partition wall trembling with a continuous chill, and brooded over the injustice and cruelty of human life. And no matter to whom she spoke, the wife of Ivan Savvich always complained that she had no worse enemies in the world than her husband and her son, both of whom were stuck-up statisticians—for the father had once held a position in the statistical department of the Province.

An hour later the mother said to Sashka, " I tell you that you shall go ! " and at every word Theoktista Petrovna pounded the table with her fist so that the glasses on it jumped and rattled.

" And I tell you I am not going, " answered Sashka drily, as the corners of his mouth trembled under his desire to show his teeth. In school he was nicknamed " The Wolf " for this habit.

" I'll beat you black and blue ! Oh, how I'll beat you ! " screamed his mother.

" Go on ; hit me, then ! "

Theoktista Petrovna knew that since her son had begun to bite it was out of the question to beat him, and if she turned him out of the house he would sooner freeze to death in the street than go to the Sviechnikovs' ; so she had recourse to the authority of her husband.

"H'm! Calls himself a father! Nice father you are—can't protect your wife from insults."

"She is right, Sashka; you ought to go. You oughtn't to be so capricious," said the father. "Maybe they will fix you up again; they are good people."

Sashka smiled with an injured air. In past years, before he was born, his father had been a teacher at the Sviechnikovs', and he had always declared that they were the best people in the world. It was then that he secured his position in the local government office. He had to break off his relation with his old friends after he married the daughter of his landlady, who was about to become the mother of his child. Then he began to drink and gradually sank so low that he was often picked up on the street and taken to the police station. But the Sviechnikovs continued to help him with money, and although Theoktista Petrovna detested them as she detested books and everything that was connected with the past life of her husband, she valued their acquaintanceship and often boasted of it to her friends.

"Maybe you will bring me something, too, from the Christmas tree," continued his father. This was a bit of artifice. Sashka understood it and felt a contempt for his father's weakness and lying, but he was suddenly seized with a desire to do something for the sick, suffering man. He knew that his father had been a long time without good tobacco.

"Well, all right," he suddenly blurted out, "give me my jacket. Have you sewed the button on? Oh, I know you well!"

II

The children were not yet allowed to go into the hall where the Christmas tree stood, so they remained in the nursery and chatted. Sashka listened to their naïve prattle with haughty contempt, and felt in his trousers pocket the already broken cigarettes that he had carried off from the master's study. Then the youngest of the Sviechnikovs, Kolya, came up, and standing in front of Sashka drew in his toes and put his finger at the corner of his puffy lips. Some six months ago the boy had been persuaded by his family's insistent efforts to renounce the ugly habit of putting his finger in his mouth, but he had not yet been able to leave off the gesture completely. His yellow hair, cut straight across his forehead, his curly locks hanging down over his shoulders, and his blue, wondering eyes produced a general appearance that immediately put him into the class of youngsters whom Sashka had made the special object of his persecutions.

"Are you an ungrateful boy?" he asked Sashka. "Mama told me that you are, and that I am a good boy."

"Don't think you could be better if you tried," Sashka answered, looking at the child's neat velvet knee-breeches and his large, flat collar.

"Do you want my gun? Here, you can have it," and the little fellow handed Sashka a toy gun with a cork attached to it. The "wolf" aimed at the nose of the unsuspecting Kolya and pulled the trigger, discharging the cork. It struck the boy's nose and rebounded. Kolya's blue eyes opened still wider and grew moist. He removed his finger from his lips to his nose. His eyelids twitched convulsively and he said in a confused voice:

"You bad, bad boy!"

A beautiful young lady, with hair parted smoothly on both sides and drawn over her ears, entered the nursery. She was a sister of the hostess and a former pupil of Sashka's father.

"This is the boy I was speaking about to you," she said to the bald-headed gentleman who came in with her, pointing to Sashka. "Say good-evening, Sashka; it is not nice for such a big boy as you are to be so impolite."

Sashka, however, greeted neither her nor the bald-headed gentleman. He knew—although the beautiful lady had no suspicion of his knowledge—that his unhappy father had once loved her, and that she had married somebody else; and although his father's marriage had taken place first, Sashka could never forgive her for her betrayal of his father.

"Bad blood," sighed the beautiful young lady. "Is it not possible for you to find a place for him? My husband thinks that a technical school would be more suitable for him than the elementary. Sashka, would you like to go to a manual-training school?"

"No!" answered Sashka savagely. He had heard the words "my husband," and this had made him surly.

"Why, what do you want to become, my little fellow?—a swineherd, maybe?" asked the gentleman.

"No, not a swineherd," answered Sashka, somewhat insulted.

"What then?"

Sashka did not know. "It's all the same to me," he answered, after some reflection. "I'll be a swineherd, for all I care."

The bald-headed gentleman looked at the strange boy and shook his head. When he raised his eyes from Sashka's patched shoes to his face, the boy put out his tongue and drew it in again so quickly that the lady, who had momentarily turned aside and did not notice the gesture, was greatly surprised at the shocked appearance of the old gentleman.

"Yes," said Sashka decidedly. "I want to go to the manual-training school.

The beautiful lady was greatly pleased at this. The thought passed through her mind that old love never dies.

"I don't think we can find a place for you very soon; there is no room in the manual-training school just now," said the old gentleman, as he smoothed down a rebellious lock of hair on his neck. "However, we'll see what we can do."

The children were excited and talked noisily in expectation of what was coming. The experiment with the gun, initiated by Sashka, who enjoyed special respect on account of his size and reputation as a bad boy, was generally imitated, and many a snub nose soon grew very red. The girls folded their hands and rocked with laughter at seeing their boys receive the blows of the discharged gun without so much as making a wry face, valiantly defying all fear and pain.

Suddenly the door of the hall opened, and a voice called out, "Come, children! Hush, not so loud!"

With eyes wide open and bated breath, the children filed in solemn procession, two by two, into the hall, and walked slowly round the Christmas tree that towered high above them in its brilliancy. A strong, almost overpowering light fell on the round, wide-open eyes and parted lips of the children. For a few minutes a profound, unbroken silence of astonishment reigned in the room; then suddenly there resounded a loud chorus of delighted, joyous children's voices. One of the little girls, no longer able to restrain her ecstasy, began to jump up and down, while her short plait of hair, tied with a blue ribbon, struck her shoulders at each motion.

Sashka looked sombre and downcast. Evil was at work in his wounded heart. He too was blinded by the brilliant light of the many tapers that burned on the beautifully decorated Christmas tree, but its very beauty estranged him and filled him with the same animosity as the neat, tidy, beautiful children. He wanted to kick down the tree and hurl it, with all its extravagant ornament and dazzling radiancy, upon the heads of the merry children. It was as if an iron hand clutched his quivering, childish heart, pressing and squeezing the last drop of warm blood out of it. He sat down in a corner behind the piano, and, hardly conscious of what he was doing, broke to pieces all the cigarettes in his pocket. It came into his mind that he too had a father and a mother and a home, and yet why was it that he seemed not to have them, and that there was no place where he could celebrate his own Christmas Eve as these children did? Suddenly he thought of a little penknife that he had obtained some time ago by trading with other children, and

that he loved very much. It was already old and ugly, the points of the blades were broken, and the white plate on the handle was almost half gone. To-morrow, he thought, he would put the finishing touches to it and throw it away, and then there would be nothing more for him to love or enjoy.

Suddenly his eyes lighted up with interest, and, as if by a magic spell, the usual, bold insolent and self-confident expression of his face took on a tinge of hesitating admiration.

On the side where he sat the Christmas tree was but feebly illumined, and as he stared aimlessly into the dim light, he suddenly perceived something that his soul had missed in all the plays and pictures that he had seen before, and compared to which everything around him was so empty and colourless that it seemed to him as if the people whom he saw and with whom he spoke were not really alive, and as if there must be some better people somewhere, whom it was impossible to see. The boy's longing, his slumbering sense of beauty, had recognised this object instantly. It was a little wax angel, lightly attached by a rubber band to a thick branch of the fir tree. It seemed to be floating in the air. Its transparent wings trembled softly in the brilliant light, and it appeared to be alive and soaring. The rosy little hands with their tiny fingers were outspread with an expressive upward gesture, and beneath them the beautiful little head was radiant in the halo of its golden hair—like Kolya's.

But Sashka saw in this little head something more, something different from what he saw in either Kolya's or any other child's face, or indeed in any object that he had ever before known. The little angel was neither cheerful nor melancholy; but there was an expression on its face that could neither be translated into words nor comprehended by the mind; if could only be felt and enjoyed. Sashka would have been unable to say what it was that so powerfully attracted him to the little angel; yet he was certain that he had always known and loved it—loved it more than his penknife and his father—more than everything in the world. Filled with still doubting admiration and with anxiety but vaguely understood, he muttered:

“Dear, dear little angel!”

And the longer he looked the more significant and momentous seemed to him the expression of the little angel. It was so infinitely distant and different from everything that surrounded it! The other playthings seemed to be proud of being so beautifully decorated, and of hanging on the brilliant Christmas tree; but the little angel looked sad, as if it feared the intrusion of the dazzling light, and purposely hid itself in the dark green to avoid being seen. A feeling of profound reverence took possession of Sashka; his heart went

out with loving admiration to the angel. Even to touch its delicate little wings were sacrilege, an act of sheer madness!

"Dear, dear heavenly creature!" muttered Sashka.

His brain was on fire. He clasped his hands behind his back, and prepared to do mortal combat in defence of the little angel; he paced up and down with cautious, stealthy steps, not daring to look at it for fear of attracting attention, but pervaded with its presence, and feeling certain that it had not yet flown away.

Her ladyship appeared at the door, a tall, stately dame with a towering coiffure of dazzling white hair that encircled her head like an aureole. The children surrounded her and gave vent to their delight in loud, noisy ejaculations, while the little girl who had been jumping up and down now hung heavily on the lady's hand, and despite her heroic efforts could scarcely keep her drowsy eyes from closing. Sashka stepped up to the lady, and there was a lump in his throat when he began to speak.

"Aunt—listen, aunt!" he said, endeavouring to give his voice its softest expression, but succeeded only in making it seem even coarser than usual. "Aunt!"

With the swarm of children around her she did not hear him, and Sashka tugged at her dress impatiently.

"What do you want? Why do you pull my dress?" the stately lady asked in astonishment. "That is not the way to act; it is rude."

"Auntie, dear auntie! Give me—that little angel on the tree!"

"No, I cannot let you have anything from the Christmas tree," replied the lady indifferently. "New Year's Day is the time when the tree is bared. Besides, you are no longer a baby, and you can call me by my name like the other children. Marya Dmitriyevna is my name."

Sashka felt as if he were being hurled into an abyss, and he determined to resort immediately to extreme measures.

"I am sorry—I will work hard," he blurted out. But this formula, which always worked wonders at school, seemed to make no impression at all upon the stately dame.

"That will be a very good thing for you, my friend," she answered, with the same indifference as before.

"Then give me the little angel!" said Sashka rudely.

"I told you you cannot have it," answered the lady. "Can't you understand what is said to you?"

Sashka understood absolutely nothing, and when the lady turned to go he followed her, with his eyes fixed in a blank, rigid stare on her rustling velvet gown. Into his fevered brain came the memory of a classmate at school who asked his teacher to give him a higher mark, and, when the latter declined to do it, threw himself on his

knees, clasped his hands as if in prayer, and wept bitterly. The teacher was greatly annoyed, but gave him a better mark. This episode had been immortalised at the time in a scathing caricature by Sashka, but in the present emergency he knew of no other expedient. He pulled the lady's dress again, and when she turned he fell down with a thud upon his knees before her, and held up his hands in a prayerful attitude ; but he could not weep.

"Are you out of your senses ?" cried the lady. "What is the matter with you ?"

Still on his knees, with his hands stretched out imploringly, Sashka looked with burning hatred into her face and said rudely, "Give me the little angel !"

The look in Sashka's eyes as he kept them riveted on the lady's face in order to catch her first word boded no good, and she hastened to say, "Very well, very well, you shall have it. You stupid youngster ! I am very glad to let you have it, though you do ask for it in such a strange manner. But why could you not wait until New Year's Day ? Stand up ! And you must never," she continued didactically, "never go down on your knees. It lowers a person's dignity. Kneel only before God !"

"Talk away !" thought Sashka. He stepped on her dress as he ran off behind her.

When she took down the plaything Sashka drank in the sight of it with all his eyes, while he wrinkled his nose as if in sharp pain, and spread out his ten fingers. He trembled lest the little angel should fall and be broken.

"What a pretty little thing !" said the lady, who was now sorry to part with the plaything. "Who hung it up there ? Listen ; really, what do you want this for ? You are too big for a thing of that kind. We have some picture books here. Take them ; they are more suitable for you. I have promised this angel to Kolya ; he asked me for it," she concluded, with a deliberate lie.

Sashka's anxiety was becoming insupportable. He set his teeth convulsively. The stately lady hated and feared scenes more than anything else in the world. She slowly handed him the little angel.

"Well, there you have it," she said in a displeased tone. "What a queer, obstinate child you are !"

Sashka received the little angel in his two hands, which he kept locked together like two steel gates, but at the same time he held it with such a gentle, cautious touch that the angel must assuredly have thought it was still floating in the air.

"Ah—h !" A long, gentle, dying sigh escaped from Sashka's breast, and in his eyes appeared two small tears, which remained there, not being accustomed to come out into the light. Slowly

clasping the little angel to his beating heart, he kept his beaming eyes fixed on the lady and smiled a soft, gentle smile, faint with the emotion of an unearthly joy. It seemed as if the moment the angel's wings touched his breast something glad and luminous would happen—such as had never yet been upon this sad, suffering earth.

"Ah—h!" Again he uttered the same blissful, dying sigh as the little angel's wings touched his breast. Before the radiance of this happy child's face even the splendour of the Christmas tree seemed pale. The laughter of the stately lady resounded merrily; but the dry face of the bald gentleman quivered strangely, and the children stood motionless in reverent silence. All were touched by the infinite exultation of pure human happiness. And in this brief moment all became aware of the remarkable likeness between the awkward, clumsy schoolboy in his outgrown clothes and the delicate wax angel, created by the hand of an unknown artist.

The next moment, however, the picture changed completely. Sashka gathered himself together like a panther about to leap, and looked around as if to see who would venture to approach the little angel.

"I am going home," he said drily, pushing his way through the children, "to my father."

III

The mother was already asleep, exhausted with the day's labour and with drink. A kitchen lamp burned in the little space behind the partition wall, and its feeble light penetrated with difficulty the darkened window, casting weird shadows upon the faces of Sashka and his father.

"Is this all right?" asked Sashka in a whisper. He held the little angel out of his father's reach.

"Yes, but there is something peculiar about it," whispered his father, regarding it thoughtfully. His face began to assume the same expression of concentrated attention and joy as that of his son.

"Look, it will soon fly away."

"Haven't I seen it already?" answered Sashka triumphantly. "Do you think I am blind? Just look at its wings! Look out! Don't lay your hands on it!"

The father drew his hand back quickly, and with dim eyes studied every detail of the angel's body, while Sashka remonstrated in an undertone:

"What an ugly habit you have, father, of touching everything with your hands. Why, you might break it!"

On the wall were traced sharp, dark shadows of two heads close together—a great shaggy one and a little round one. In the great

head a strange, tormenting, yet joyous work was going forward. Its eyes looked without blinking at the little angel, and under their searching gaze it grew larger and larger. The room grew brighter, and the little angel's wings moved swiftly, quietly; the soot-covered wooden wall, the dirty table, and Sashka melted into one even grey mass, without light or shadow. And it seemed to the ruined man as if he heard a pitying voice from that strange world in which he once had lived, and from which he had been cast out for ever. *There* they knew not of dirt and coarse, abusive language, of the blind, dismal, cruel war of egotism; *there* they knew not the agony of the man who is picked up in the street and abused by the rough hand of the policeman amid the laughter of the onlookers; *there* all is pure, cheerful, and bright. And all this purity had found a retreat in *her* soul, in the soul of her whom he loved more than his life and whom he had lost, while his useless life remained. Some elusive aroma united with the odour of wax that emanated from the toy, and the ruined man seemed to see her dear fingers touching the delicate little angel—those dear, sweet fingers that he longed to kiss one after another until death should lock his lips for ever. It was this that made the toy so supremely beautiful, so wondrous, so transcendent, beyond the power of human expression. The little angel descended from the heaven that was her soul, bringing thence a ray of light into the dark, smoky chamber, and into the dark soul of the man from whom everything had been taken away—love, fortune, joy.

And beside the eyes of this man of the past beamed the eyes of the youth just entering upon life, and looked caressingly at the little angel. And for these eyes the past had no existence, and the present and the future vanished before them—the ever-sorrowful, pitiable father, the coarse, insupportable mother, and the whole black waste of humiliation, abuse, and abasement, of irate, hopeless longing. Formless, misty, and vague were the dreams of Sashka, but they stirred his agitated soul profoundly. All the good that radiated over the world, all the anguish of a soul that yearned for joy, rest, and peace, that yearned for God, this little angel united within itself; and so it burned with a soft, heavenly light, while its transparent, tiny wings fluttered noiselessly with its longing.

Father and son did not look at each other. Each one suffered and rejoiced in his own way. Their sick hearts wept and trembled with delight, each for itself; and yet there was something in their emotion that bound them into one and bridged the abysmal chasm that divides one soul from another and makes each one solitary, weak, and unhappy. Unconsciously the father placed his hand on his son's shoulder, and his son's head sank unconsciously on the breast of his poor, consumptive father.

"Did she give it to you?" whispered the father, without turning his eyes from the little angel.

At another time Sashka would have answered rudely in the negative, but now the reply came from his soul, and his lips unhesitatingly uttered the conscious lie:

"She? Of course; who else?"

The father was silent, and Sashka also. A soft creaking sound came from the next room, followed by a buzzing noise, then a rattle, and raucously the clock struck, one, two, three!

"Sashka, do you ever have dreams?" asked his father thoughtfully.

"No," Sashka confessed. "Oh yes, once I did. I dreamt I fell down the roof. I wanted to catch some pigeons, and I fell."

"And I always dream," said his father. "Sometimes I have very remarkable dreams. I see everything as it used to be; I love and suffer just as in reality."

He was silent again, and Sashka felt the trembling of the hand that lay on his shoulder. More and more it trembled and quivered, and suddenly the sensitive stillness of night was interrupted by the faint, piteous sound of a repressed sigh. Sashka knit his eyebrows sternly, raised his head carefully so as not to disturb his father, and stealthily wiped a tear from his eye. It was so strange to see a big, old man weep!

"Ah, Sashka, Sashka," sobbed the father, "why is all this?"

"Well, what is the matter?" whispered Sashka sternly. "Why, you are like a baby—just like a baby."

"I won't any more; I won't," apologised the father, with a sorrowful smile. "Anyway, what does it matter?"

The mother moved in her bed near by. She heaved a sigh, spat, and mumbled with strange emphasis: "Hold that stick! Hold that stick!"

It was time to go to sleep. But first the angel must be accommodated for the night. To put it on the floor was out of the question, and the table also was dirty, so it was attached by a thread to the draught-hole of the stove. It stood out so sharply against the white background of Dutch tiles that both Sashka and the father could see it distinctly.

Having hurriedly thrown together in the corner the heap of rags upon which he was used to sleeping, Sashka quickly took off some of his clothes and lay down on his back in order to regain immediately his view of the little angel.

"Why don't you undress?" asked his father.

"It isn't worth while; I will soon get up."

Sashka intended to add that he was not at all sleepy, but he had no time for this, for he fell asleep as quickly as a stone falls to the

bottom of a deep, precipitous river. Gentle rest and peace settled at once upon the worn face of the decrepit old man and on the bold countenance of the boy who was just starting out upon life.

But the angel that was hung over the hot stove began to melt. The lamp, which had been left burning at Sashka's request, filled the room with smoke, and through the blackened shade it cast a dismal yellow light upon this picture of gradual dissolution.

The little angel seemed to move. Thick drops of molten wax flowed down its rosy feet and fell heavily on the stove-couch. The odour of kerosene oil mingled with the strong smell of molten wax. The angel trembled as if in an attempt to fly away, and then fell down with a soft thud upon the hot hearthstone.

An inquisitive beetle ran quickly around the heap of wax, burning its feet, and as quickly sped away again. A bluish light filtered through the curtained window and ushered in the new day.

LEONID N. ANDREYEV

VALIA

VALIA was reading a huge, a very huge book, almost half as large as himself, with very black letters and pictures occupying the entire page. To see the top line Valia had to stretch out his neck, lean far over the table, kneeling in his chair, and putting his short chubby finger on the letters for fear they should be lost among the other ones like them, in which case it was a difficult task to find them again. Owing to these circumstances, unforeseen by the publishers, the reading advanced very slowly, notwithstanding the breath-catching interest of the book.

It was a story about a very strong boy whose name was Prince Bova, and who could, by merely grasping the legs or arms of other boys, wrench them away from the body.

But Valia was suddenly interrupted in his reading ; his mother entered with some other woman.

"Here he is," said his mother, her eyes red with weeping. The tears had evidently been shed very recently, as she was still crushing a white lace handkerchief in her hand.

"Valichka, darling !" exclaimed the other woman ; and putting her arms about his head, she began to kiss his face and eyes, pressing her thin, hard lips to them. She did not fondle him as did his mother, whose kisses were soft and melting ; this one seemed loth to let go of him. Valia accepted her prickly caresses with a frown and silence ; he was very much displeased at being interrupted, and he did not at all like this strange woman, tall, with bony, long fingers upon which there was not even one ring. And she smelled so bad : a damp, mouldy smell, while his mother always exhaled a fresh, exquisite perfume.

At last the woman left him in peace, and while he was wiping his lips she looked him over with that quick sort of glance which seems to photograph one. His short nose with its indication of a future little hump, his thick, unchildish brows over dark eyes, and the general appearance of stern seriousness, recalled some one to her, and she began to cry. Even her weeping was unlike mamma's :

the face remained immovable while the tears quickly rolled down one after the other—before one had time to fall another was already chasing after it. Her tears ceased as suddenly as they had begun, and she asked: "Valichka, do you know me?"

"No."

"I called to see you. Twice I called to see you."

Perhaps she had called upon him, perhaps she had called twice, but how should Valia know of it? With her questions she only hindered him from reading.

"I am your mamma, Valia!" said the woman.

Valia looked around in astonishment to find his mamma, but she was no longer in the room.

"Why, can there be two mammas?" he asked. "What nonsense you are telling me."

The woman laughed, but this laugh did not please Valia; it was evident that the woman did not need to laugh at all, and did it purposely to mislead him. For some moments both were silent.

"And what book is it you are reading?"

"About Prince Bova," Valia informed her, with serious self-esteem and an evident respect for the big book.

"Ah, it must be very interesting! Tell me, please!" the woman asked with an ingratiating smile.

And once more something unnatural and false sounded in this voice, which tried to be soft and round like the voice of his mother, but remained sharp and prickly. The same insincerity appeared also in all the movements of the woman; she turned on her chair and even stretched out her neck with a manner as if preparing for a long and attentive listening; and when Valia reluctantly began the story, she immediately retired within herself, like a dark lantern on which the cover is suddenly thrown. Valia felt the discourtesy toward himself and Prince Bova, but, wishing to be polite, he quickly finished the story and added: "That is all."

"Well, good-bye, my dear, my dove!" said the strange woman, and once more pressed her lips to Valia's face. "I shall soon call again. Will you be glad?"

"Yes, please come," politely replied Valia, and to get rid of her more quickly he added: "I shall be very glad."

The visitor left him, but hardly had Valia found in the book again the word at which he had been interrupted, when mamma entered, looked at him, and she also began to weep. He could easily understand why the other woman should have wept; she must have been sorry that she was so unpleasant and tiresome; but why should his mamma weep?

"Listen, mamma," he said musingly; "how that woman bored

me! She says that she is my mamma. Why, could there be two mammas to one boy?"

"No, baby, there could not; but she speaks the truth; she is your mother."

"And what are you, then?"

"I am your auntie."

This was a very unexpected discovery, but Valia received it with unshakable indifference; auntie, well, let it be auntie—was it not just the same? A word did not, as yet, have the same meaning for him as it would have for a grown person. But his former mother did not understand this, and began to explain why it had so happened that she had been a mother and had become an aunt. Once, very long ago, when Valia was very, very little—

"How little? So?" Valia raised his hand about a quarter of a yard from the table. "Like Kiska?" Valia exclaimed, joyfully surprised, with mouth half opened and brow lifted. He spoke of the white kitten that had been presented to him.

"Yes."

Valia broke into a happy laugh, but immediately resumed his usual earnestness, and with the condescension of a grown person recalling the mistakes of his youth, he remarked: "How funny I must have been!"

When he was so very little and funny, like Kiska, he had been brought by that woman and given away for ever, also like Kiska. And now, when he had become so big and clever, the woman wanted him.

"Do you wish to go to her?" asked his former mother, and reddened with joy when Valia resolutely and sternly said: "No, she does not please me!" and once more took up his book.

Valia considered the affair closed, but he was mistaken. This strange woman, with a face as devoid of life as if all the blood had been drained out of it, who had appeared from no one knew where, and vanished without leaving a trace, seemed to have set the whole house in turmoil and filled it with a dull alarm. Mamma-auntie often cried and repeatedly asked Valia if he wished to leave her; uncle-papa grumbled, patted his bald pate so that the sparse, grey hair on it stood up, and when auntie-mamma was absent from the room he also asked Valia if he would like to go to that woman. Once, in the evening, when Valia was already in his little bed but was not yet sleeping, he heard his uncle and auntie speaking of him and the woman. The uncle spoke in an angry growl at which the crystal pendants of the chandelier gently trembled and sparkled with bluish and reddish lights.

"You speak nonsense, Nastasia Philippovna. We have no right to give the child away."

VALIA

"She loves him, Grisha."

"And we! Do we not love him? You are arguing strangely, Nastasia Philippovna. It seems as if you would be g to get rid of the child——"

"Are you not ashamed of yourself?"

"Well, well, how quick you are to take offence! Just consider this matter cold-bloodedly and reasonably. Some frivolous thing or other gives birth to children, light-heartedly disposes of them by placing them on your threshold, and afterward says, 'Kindly give me my child, because, on account of my lover having abandoned me, I feel lonesome. For theatres and concerts I have no money, so give me the child to serve as a toy to play with.' No, madam, be easy, we shall see who wins in this case!"

"You are unjust to her, Grisha. You know well how ill and lonely she is——"

"You, Nastasia Philippovna, can make even a saint lose patience, by God! And you seem to have forgotten the child. Is it wholly immaterial whether he is brought up an honest man or a scoundrel? And I could bet my head that he would be brought up by her a scoundrel, rascal, and—scoundrel!"

"Grisha!"

"I ask you, for God's sake, not to irritate me! And where did you get this devilish habit of contradicting? 'She is so lonely.' And are *we* not lonely? The heartless woman that you are, Nastasia Philippovna! And why the devil did I marry you?"

The heartless woman broke into tears, and her husband immediately begged her pardon, declaring that only a born fool could pay any attention to the words of such an old ass as he was. Gradually she became calmer and asked, "What does Talonsky say?"

"And what makes you think that he is such a clever fellow?" Gregory Aristarchovich again flew into a passion. "He says that everything depends on how the court will look at it. . . . Something new, is it not, as if we did not know without his telling that everything depends on how the court will look at it! Of course it matters little to him—what does he care?—he will have his say and then safely go his way. If I had *my* way, it would go ill with all these empty talkers——"

Here Nastasia Philippovna shut the dining-room door and Valia did not hear the end of the conversation. But he lay for a long time with open eyes, trying to understand what sort of woman it was who wished to take him away from his home and ruin him.

On the next day he waited from early morning, expecting his auntie to ask him if he wished to go to his mother; but auntie did not ask. Neither did his uncle. Instead of this, they both gazed at Valia as if he were dangerously ill and would soon die; they

caressed him and brought him large books with coloured pictures. The woman did not call any more, but it seemed to Valia that she must be lurking outside the door watching for him, and that as soon as he should pass the threshold she would seize him and carry him out into a black and dismal distance where cruel monsters were wriggling and breathing fire.

In the evenings, while his uncle Gregory Aristarchovich was occupied in his study and Nastasia Philippovna was knitting something, or playing a game of patience, Valia read his books, in which the lines would grow gradually thicker and the letters smaller. Everything in the room was quiet, so quiet that the only thing to be heard was the rustling of the pages he turned, and occasionally the uncle's loud cough from the study, or the falling of the cards. The lamp, with its blue shade, threw a bright light on the blue plush table-cover, but the corners of the room were full of a quiet, mysterious gloom. There stood large plants with curious leaves, and roots crawling out upon the surface and looking very much like fighting serpents, and it seemed as if something large and dark was moving amid them. Valia read, and before his wide-open eyes passed terrible, beautiful, and sad images which awakened in him pity and love, but more often fear. Valia was sorry for the poor water-nymph who so dearly loved the handsome prince that for him she had given up her sisters and the deep, peaceful ocean ; and the prince knew nothing of this love, because the poor water-nymph was dumb, and so he married a gay princess ; and while great festivities in honour of the wedding were in full swing on board the ship, and music was playing and all were enjoying themselves, the poor water-nymph threw herself into the dark waves to die. Poor, sweet, little water-nymph, so quiet and sad and modest ! But often terrible, cruel, human monsters appeared before Valia. In the dark nights they flew somewhere on their prickly wings, and the air whistled over their heads, and their eyes burned like red-hot coals. And afterward, they were surrounded by other monsters like themselves while a mysterious and terrible something was happening there. Laughter as sharp as a knife, long and pitiful wailing ; strange weird dances in the purplish light of torches, their slant, fiery tongues wrapped in the red clouds of smoke ; and dead men with long, black beards. All this was the manifestation of a single enigmatic and cruel power, wishing to destroy man. Angry and mysterious spectres filled the air, hid among the plants, whispered something, and pointed their bony fingers at Valia ; they gazed at him from behind the door of the adjoining unlit room, giggled and waited till he would go to bed, when they would silently dart about over his head, they peeped at him from out of the garden through the large, dark windows, and wailed sorrowfully with the wind.

VALIA

In and out among all this vicious and terrible throng appeared the image of that woman who had come for Valia. Many people came and went in the house of Gregory Aristarchovich, and Valia did not remember their faces, but this face lived in his memory. It was such an elongated, thin, yellow face, and smiled with a sly, dissembling smile, from which two deep lines appeared at the two corners of the mouth. If this woman took Valia he would die.

"Listen," Valia once said to his aunt, tearing himself away from his book for a moment. "Listen," he repeated with his usual earnestness, and with a glance that gazed straight into the eyes of the person to whom he spoke: "I shall call you mamma, not auntie. You talk nonsense when you say that the woman—is mamma. You are mamma, not she."

"Why?" asked Nastasia Philippovna, blushing like a young girl who has just received a compliment. But along with her joy there could also be heard in her voice the sound of fear for Valia. He had become so strange of late, and timid; feared to sleep alone, as he used to do, raved in his sleep and cried.

"But, Valichka, it is true, she is your mother."

"I really wonder where you get this habit of contradicting!" Valia said after some musing, imitating the tone of Gregory Aristarchovich.

Nastasia Philippovna laughed, but while preparing for bed that night she spoke for a considerable time with her husband, who boomed like a Turkish drum, abused the empty talkers and frivolous, hare-brained women, and afterward went with his wife to see Valia.

They gazed long and silently into the face of the sleeping child. The flame of the candle swayed in the trembling hand of Gregory Aristarchovich and lent a fantastic, death-like colouring to the face of the boy, which was as white as the pillows on which it rested. It seemed as if a pair of stern, black eyes looked at them from the dark hollows, demanding a reply and threatening them with misfortune and unknown sorrow, and the lips twitched into a strange, ironic smile as if upon his helpless child-head lay a vague reflection of those cruel and mysterious spectre monsters that silently hovered over it.

"Valia!" whispered the frightened Nastasia. The boy sighed deeply but did not move, as if enchained in the sleep of death.

"Valia! Valia!" the deep, trembling voice of her husband was added to that of Nastasia Philippovna.

Valia opened his eyes, shaded by thick eyelashes; the light of the candle made him blink, and he sprang to his knees, pale and frightened. His uncovered, thin little arms like a pearl necklace encircled his auntie's full, rosy neck, and hiding his little head upon her breast and screwing up his eyes tight as if fearing that they

would open of themselves, he whispered : " I am afraid, mamma, I am afraid ! Do not go ! "

That was a bad night for the whole household. When Valia at last fell asleep, Gregory Aristarchovich got an attack of asthma. He choked, and his full, white breast rose and fell spasmodically under the ice compresses. Toward morning he grew more tranquil, and the worn Nastasia fell asleep with the thought that her husband would not survive the loss of the child.

After a family council at which it was decided that Valia ought to read less and to see more of children of his own age, little girls and boys were brought to the house to play with him. But Valia from the first conceived a dislike for these foolish children, who, in his eyes, were too noisy, loud, and indecorous. They pulled flowers, tore books, jumped over chairs, and fought like little monkeys ; and he, serious and thoughtful, looked on at their pranks with amazement and displeasure, and, going up to Nastasia Philippovna, said : " They tire me ! I would rather sit by you. "

And in the evenings he once more took up his book, and when Gregory Aristarchovich, grumbling at all the devilry the child read about, and by which he was losing his senses, gently tried to take the book from Valia's hands, the child silently and resolutely pressed it to himself. And the improvised pedagogue beat a confused retreat and angrily scolded his wife :

" Is this what you call bringing up ! No, Nastasia Philippovna, I see you are more fit to take care of kittens than to bring up children. The boy is so spoiled that one cannot even take a book away from him. "

One morning, while Valia was sitting at breakfast with Nastasia Philippovna, Gregory Aristarchovich suddenly came rushing into the dining-room. His hat was tilted on the back of his head, his face was covered with perspiration ; while still at the other side of the door he shouted joyfully into the room :

" Refused ! The court has refused ! "

The diamond earrings in Nastasia Philippovna's ears began to sparkle, and the little knife she held in her hand dropped to the plate with a clatter.

" Is it true ? " she asked breathlessly.

Gregory Aristarchovich made a serious face, just to show that he had spoken the truth, but immediately forgetting his intention, his face became covered with a whole network of merry wrinkles. Then once more remembering that he lacked that earnestness of demeanour with which important news is usually imparted, he frowned, pushed a chair up to the table, placed his hat upon it, forgot that it was his hat, and thinking the chair to be already occupied by some one, threw a stern look at Nastasia Philippovna, then on Valia, winked

his eye at Valia ; and only after all these solemn preliminaries did he declare :

" I always said that Talonsky was a devilish clever fellow ; can't fool *him* easily, Nastasia Philippovna."

" So it is true ? "

" You are always ready with your eternal doubts. I said the case of Mme. Akimova is dismissed. Clever, is it not, little brother ? " he turned to Valia and added in a stern, official tone : " And that said Akimova is to pay the costs."

" That woman will not take me, then ? "

" I guess she won't, brother mine ! Ah, I have entirely forgotten, I brought you some books ! "

Gregory Aristarchovich rushed into the corridor, but halted on hearing Nastasia Philippovna's scream. Valia had fallen back on his chair in a faint.

A happy time began for the family. It was as if some one who had lain dangerously ill in the house had suddenly recovered, and all began to breathe more easily and freely. Valia lost his fear of the terrible monsters and no longer suffered from nightmares. When the little monkeys, as he called the children, came to see him again, he was the most inventive of the lot. But even into the most fantastic plays he introduced his habitual earnestness and staidness, and when they played Indians he found it indispensable to divest himself of almost all his clothing and cover his body with red paint.

In view of the businesslike manner in which these games were conducted, Gregory Aristarchovich now found it possible to participate in them, as far as his abilities allowed. In the role of a bear he did not appear to great advantage, but he had a great and well-deserved success in that of an elephant. And when Valia, silent and earnest as a true son of the Goddess Kali, sat upon his father's shoulders and gently tapped upon his rosy bald pate with a tiny toy hammer, he really reminded one of a little Eastern prince who despotically reigns over people and animals.

The lawyer Talonsky tried to convey a hint to Gregory Aristarchovich that all was not safe yet, but the former could not comprehend how three judges could reverse the decision of three other judges, when the laws are the same here and everywhere. And when the lawyer insisted, Gregory Aristarchovich grew angry, and to prove that there was nothing to be feared from the higher court, he brought forward that same Talonsky on whom he now implicitly relied :

" Why, are you not going to be present when the case is brought before the court ? Well, then, what is there to be talked about ? I wish you, Nastasia Philippovna, would make him ashamed of himself."

Talonsky smiled, and Nastasia Philippovna gently chid him for his purposeless doubts. They also spoke of the woman who had caused all the trouble ; but now that she could menace them no more, and the court had decided that she must bear all the costs of the trial, they often dubbed her " poor woman."

Since the day Valia had heard that the woman had no longer any power to take him, she had lost in his eyes the halo of mysterious fear which enveloped her like a mist and distorted the features of her thin face, and Valia began to think of her as he did of all other people. He now often heard that she was unhappy and could not understand why ; but this pale, bloodless face grew more simple, natural, and near to him ; the " poor woman," as they called her, began to interest him, and recalling other poor women of whom he had read, he felt a growing pity and a timid tenderness for her.

He imagined that she must sit alone in some dark room, fearing something and weeping, always weeping, as she had wept then when she had come to see him. And he felt sorry that he had not told her the story of Prince Bova better than he had done at the time.

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It appeared that three judges could, after all, disagree with the decision of three other judges. The higher court had reversed the decision of the district court ; the child was adjudged to his real mother. And the appeal was not considered by the senate.

When the woman came to take Valia away with her, Gregory Aristarchovich was not at home ; he was at Talonsky's house and was lying in Talonsky's bedroom, and only the bald, rosy pate was visible above the sea of snow-white pillows.

Nastasia Philippovna did not leave her room, and the maid led Valia forth from it already dressed for the road. He wore a fur coat and high overshoes in which he moved his feet with difficulty. From under his fur cap looked out a pale little face with a frank and serious expression in the dark eyes. Under his arm Valia carried a book in which was the story of a poor water-nymph.

The tall, gaunt woman pressed the boy to her shabby coat and sobbed out : " How you have grown, Valichka ! You are unrecognisable," she said, trying to jest ; but Valia adjusted his cap, and, contrary to habit, did not look into the eyes of the one who from this day on was to be his mother, but into her mouth. It was large, but with beautiful, small teeth ; the two wrinkles on the corners of the mouth were still in the same place where Valia had seen them first, only now they were deeper.

" You are not angry with me ? " asked mamma ; but Valia, not replying to her question, said : " Let us be gone."

" Valichka ! " came a pitiful scream from Nastasia Philippovna's

room, and she appeared on the threshold with eyes swollen from weeping, and clasping her hands she rushed toward the child, sank on her knees, and put her head on his shoulder. She did not utter a sound, only the diamonds in her ears trembled.

"Come, Valia," sternly said the tall woman, taking his hand. "We must not remain any longer among people who have subjected your mother to such torture—such torture!"

Her dry voice was full of hatred, and she longed to strike the kneeling woman with her foot.

"Ugh! Heartless wretches! You would be glad to take even my only child from me!" she wrathfully whispered, and pulled Valia away by his hand. "Come! Don't be like your father, who abandoned me."

"Take care of him," Nastasia called after them.

The hired sleigh which stood waiting for them flew softly and lightly over the snow, and noiselessly carried Valia away from the quiet house with its wonderful plants and flowers, its mysterious fairy-tale world, immeasurable and deep as the sea, with its windows gently screened by the boughs of the tall trees of the garden. Soon the house was lost in the mass of other houses, as similar to each other as the letters in Valia's book, and vanished for ever from Valia.

It seemed to him as if they were swimming in a river, the banks of which were constituted of rows of lanterns as close to each other as beads on a string; but when they approached nearer, the beads were scattered, forming large, dark spaces and merging behind into just such a line of light. And then Valia thought that they were standing motionless on the very same spot; and everything began to be like a fairy tale—he himself and the tall woman who was pressing him to her with her bony hand, and everything around him.

The hand in which he carried his book was getting stiff with cold, but he would not ask his mother to take the book from him.

The small room into which Valia's mother had taken him was untidy and hot; in a corner near the large bed stood a little curtained bed such as Valia had not slept in for a long, long time.

"You are frozen! Well, wait, we shall soon have some tea! Well, now you are with your mamma. Are you glad?" his mother asked with the hard, unpleasant look of one who has been forced to smile beneath blows all her life long.

"No," Valia replied shyly, frightened at his own frankness.

"No? And I had bought some toys for you. Just look, there they are on the window."

Valia approached the window and examined the toys. They were wretched paper horses with straight, thick legs, Punch with a red cap on, with an idiotically grinning face and a large nose, and little tin soldiers with one foot raised in the air.

Valia had long ago given up playing with toys and did not like them, but from politeness he did not show it to his mother. "Yes, they are nice toys," he said.

She noticed the glance he threw at the window, and said with that unpleasant, ingratiating smile :

"I did not know what you liked, darling, and I bought them for you a long time ago."

Valia was silent, not knowing what to reply.

"You must know that I am all alone, Valia, all alone in the wide world ; I have no one whose advice I could ask ; I thought they would please you." Valia was silent.

Suddenly the muscles of the woman's face relaxed and the tears began to drop from her eyes, quickly, quickly, one after the other ; and she threw herself on the bed, which gave a pitiful squeak under the weight of her body, and with one hand pressed to her breast, the other to her temples, she looked vacantly through the wall with her pale, faded eyes, and whispered :

"He was not pleased ! Not pleased !"

Valia promptly approached the bed, put his little hand, still red with the cold, on the large head of his mother, and spoke with the same serious staidness which distinguished this boy's speech :

"Do not cry, mamma. I will love you very much. I do not care to play with toys, but I will love you ever so much. If you wish, I will read to you the story of the poor water-nymph."

LEONID N. ANDREYEV

SILENCE

I

ON a moonlight night in May, when the nightingales were singing, Father Ignaty's wife entered his study. Her face wore an expression of intense suffering, and the little lamp in her hand trembled. Going up to her husband, and touching his shoulder, she burst into tears, saying :

" Father, let us go to Verotchka ! "

Without turning his head, Father Ignaty looked down at his wife from over his spectacles. He looked long and fixedly, until she motioned with her free hand and sank on to the low sofa.

" How pitiless you both are ! " she said slowly, with a stress on the word pitiless, while her good-natured face twitched with pain and determination, as though by her expression she wished to convey how cruel her husband and daughter were.

Father Ignaty smiled and got up. He shut his book, took off his spectacles, put them into their case, and grew thoughtful. His long black beard, with threads of silver in it, lay in a beautiful mass on his chest, and slowly rose and fell with his breathing.

" Very well, then ; let us go ! " he said.

Olga Stepanovna got up quickly and asked in a timid, wheedling voice :

" You won't scold her, Father, will you ? You know what she is. . . . "

Vera's room was upstairs, and the narrow winding staircase bent and groaned under Father Ignaty's heavy tread. Tall and heavy, he stooped down so as not to hit the ceiling, and frowned squeamishly when his wife's white blouse came in contact with his face. He knew that nothing would come of their talk to Vera.

" Why have you come ? " asked Vera, a bare arm uplifted to her eyes. The other arm lay on the white summer bedcover, and could hardly be distinguished from it, so white and transparent and cold it was.

"Verotchka!" . . . the mother began, but burst into tears and could not continue.

"Vera!" the father said, trying to soften his hard, dry voice. "Vera, tell us what is the matter with you."

Vera was silent.

"Vera, have not your mother and I deserved your confidence? Do we not love you? Have you any one nearer to you than us? Tell us about your sorrow, and, believe an old, experienced man, you will feel better afterwards. It will be better for us too. Just look at your old mother, see how she suffers. . . ."

"Verotchka!"

"And I, too . . ." the hard voice broke and trembled. "And I . . . do you think it is easy for me? Do you think I do not see that you are consumed by some sorrow . . . and what that sorrow is I, your own father, do not know. Do you think that right?"

Vera was silent. Father Ignaty stroked his beard gently, as though he feared that involuntarily his fingers would clutch it violently.

"Against my wish you went to St. Petersburg. I did not revile you as an undutiful daughter, did I? Before your departure I gave you all the money you wanted. Have I not been a good father to you? Why don't you speak? This is what has resulted from your St. Petersburg!"

Father Ignaty ceased. He pictured St. Petersburg to himself as some terrible, monstrous, crushing place, fraught with unknown dangers and full of strange, indifferent people. There his Vera, alone and weak, had been ruined. An intense hatred arose in Father Ignaty's heart towards the terrible town and towards his daughter who was so obstinately silent.

"St. Petersburg has nothing to do with it," Vera said morosely, and closed her eyes. "And there is nothing the matter with me. You had better both go to bed; it is late."

"Verotchka!" the mother moaned. "Little one, tell me everything!"

"Oh, mother!" Vera interrupted her impatiently.

Father Ignaty sat down and laughed.

"Well, so there is nothing whatever the matter?" he asked sarcastically.

"Father," Vera said sharply, raising herself in bed, "you know that I love you and mother, but . . . It is nothing. I am merely lonely. It will wear off. You had better go to bed. I want to sleep too; to-morrow, or some other time, we can talk about it."

Father Ignaty started up so suddenly that his chair fell against the wall, and took his wife's arm.

"Come!"

"Verotchka!"

"Come, I tell you!" Father Ignaty shouted. "If she has forgotten God, then we . . . we do not count."

He led his wife almost forcibly from the room. As they were descending the stairs, Olga Stepanovna, slackening her pace, said in a spiteful whisper:

"Well, that is what you have made of her, priest! She has copied this manner from you. You will have to answer for it. Poor unfortunate that I am. . . ."

And she burst into tears. She did not see the steps, but put down each foot as if beneath lay an abyss into which she wanted to fall. From that day Father Ignaty refused to speak to his daughter, but she did not seem to notice it. As before, she would lie in her own room or wander about, frequently rubbing her eyes with the palms of her hands, as though she were trying to regain her vision. And oppressed by these two silent people, the priest's wife, who was fond of laughter and fun, became timid and flurried, and did not know what to say or do. Sometimes Vera would go out for a walk. About a week after the evening of their conversation Vera went out one evening as usual. The parents did not see her again alive, for on that evening she threw herself under a train and was cut in two. Father Ignaty himself read the funeral service. His wife was not present at the church, as she had suffered a stroke on hearing the news of Vera's death. She lost the use of her hands, legs and tongue, and lay immovable in the semi-darkened room, while the sound of funeral bells came in from the belfry next door. She heard the people issue from the church and sing the hymn for the dead in front of her house; she tried to lift a hand to make the sign of the cross, but the hand would not obey; she wanted to say "Good-bye, Vera," but her tongue lay in her mouth, huge and heavy. Her expression was so calm that one looking at her would have thought her resting or asleep; only her eyes were open.

Many people were present at the funeral, acquaintances and strangers. Every one there pitied Vera for having suffered such a horrible death; and tried to detect in Father Ignaty signs of the great sorrow. They did not like him, for he was harsh and proud, hated sinners and did not forgive them, while at the same time he himself was envious and greedy, and lost no occasion of taking more than his due share from the parishioners. Every one wanted to see him suffering and crushed; to realise that he was twice guilty of his daughter's death, because he had been a cruel father and a bad minister not to have protected his own flesh and blood from sin. All looked at him inquisitively, and he, feeling all eyes on his back, tried to straighten that broad back, while the thought uppermost in his

mind was not of his daughter's death but of the effort he must make not to let himself drop.

"Cursed priest!" said Karsenov the joiner, with a shake of his head. Father Ignaty owed him five roubles for frames.

And thus, hard and straight, Father Ignaty walked to the graveyard and thus he returned. It was only at the door of his wife's room that his back bent somewhat, but that may have been because most doors were not high enough for him. Coming in from the daylight he could not at first distinguish his wife's face, but when he did see it he was amazed at its calmness, and that there were no tears in the eyes. They bore no expression, either of anger or of grief—they were dumb and silent, just as obstinately so as the rest of that heavy helpless body that lay immovable on the feather bed.

"How do you feel?" Father Ignaty asked. But the lips were silent, and silent were the eyes. He laid his hand on his wife's forehead; it was cold and moist, and Olga Stepanova made no sign that she felt the contact; and when he removed his hand there gazed at him steadily two large grey eyes that the enlarged pupils made almost black, and in them there was no sign of sorrow or anger.

"Well, I will go to my room," Father Ignaty said.

He grew cold, and a feeling of terror seized him. He went into the drawing-room, where everything was as clean and tidy as usual, the tall arm-chairs in their white covers looking like corpses in shrouds. By one of the windows hung a wire cage, but it was empty and the door was open.

"Nastasia!" he shouted, and his voice seemed to him so rough that he felt uncomfortable to be shouting so loudly in these quiet rooms so soon after his daughter's funeral. "Nastasia!" he called, lowering his voice, "where is the canary?"

The cook, who had cried so much that her nose was swollen and red as a beetroot, replied angrily:

"Can't you see it has flown away?"

"Why did you let it out?" He frowned threateningly.

Nastasia burst into tears, and wiping her eyes on her cotton kerchief, said through her sobs:

"Darling . . . young lady. . . . How could you do it?"

It seemed to Father Ignaty that the gay yellow canary, always singing, with head cocked, was in reality Vera's soul, and that had it not flown away, one could not have said that Vera was dead. He grew still angrier with the cook and shouted:

"Get out!" and, when Nastasia did not reach the door as soon as she might have done, added: "You fool!"

II

From the day of the funeral, silence reigned in the little house. It was not quietness, because quietness is the absence of sound ; it was silence, for it seemed as though those who were silent would have spoken if they could. Thus thought Father Ignaty when he went into his wife's room and met her steadfast gaze, and he felt as though the whole atmosphere had turned to lead and weighed upon his back. Thus he thought as he looked through his daughter's music, which contained her voice in print, her books, and the large coloured portrait she had brought from St. Petersburg. He would look at the portrait methodically ; first he would examine the cheeks, lit up in the portrait, and picture to himself the bruise that he had seen on dead Vera's cheek, and which he could not explain. Every time he puzzled about the cause of it he came to the conclusion that had it been done by the train the whole head would have been crushed, whereas actually it had been quite uninjured. Perhaps some one had kicked it or scratched it accidentally in lifting the corpse.

But to ponder long over the details of Vera's death was terrible, and he took to examining the eyes in the portrait. They were beautiful eyes, black in colour, with long lashes that cast such a deep shadow that the whites through it seemed bright by comparison, and looked as though surrounded by a frame of mourning. The clever, unknown, artist had given them a strange expression—as though between the eyes and what they gazed on there lay a thin transparent veil. They were a little like the black piano-case, on which was a thin imperceptible layer of summer dust that softened the sheen of the polished wood. No matter where he put the portrait, the eyes followed him, did not speak, and were silent ; and this silence was so palpable that it seemed to him one could hear it, and gradually he began to believe that he could hear the silence.

Every morning after service Father Ignaty came into the drawing-room, took in at a glance the empty cage and all the other familiar things there, sat down in a chair, closed his eyes, and listened to the silence of the house. There was something strange about it. The silence of the cage was soft and tender, but in this silence one could feel sorrow and tears and distant, dead laughter. His wife's silence, softened by the walls, was steadfast, heavy as lead, and awful ; so awful that on the hottest day he would feel cold. Eternal, cold as the grave and incomprehensible as death, was his daughter's silence. It seemed to him that this silence was a torture to itself and wanted to speak, but something strong and ruthless as a machine

held it rigid and pulled it taut like a wire. Somewhere at the far end the wire began to vibrate, and emitted a soft, timid, and pitiful note. With joy and terror he caught this new-born sound, and resting his arms on the arms of the chair he stretched out his head and waited for the sound to come towards him, but it broke off and was silent.

"Nonsense!" Father Ignaty said angrily, rising, still tall and straight, from his chair. From the window he saw the sunlit square with its round even cobbles, and, opposite, the long, stone, windowless wall of the shed. At the corner stood a cabman, motionless as a graven image, and it seemed strange that he should stand there; for hours at a time there was not a single passer-by.

III

Out of the house, Father Ignaty had to talk a good deal: to the deacons and parishioners about Church matters; and to acquaintances with whom he played "preference." But when he returned home it seemed to him that he had been silent the whole day. This was because he had not been able to mention to any of the people to whom he had spoken the thing that lay uppermost in his mind: the cause of Vera's death. He did not realise that now he would never get to know this, and still thought it possible. Every night—they were all sleepless nights now—he pictured to himself the moment when, at midnight, he and his wife had stood at the foot of Vera's bed and had implored her: "Tell us!" And when his memory reached these two words, what had happened afterwards came to him not as it had really been. His closed eyes held in their depth the living Vera, not torn by grief as she had been on that night, but raising herself in bed with a smile and saying. . . . What was she saying? And those unuttered words of hers, that would have decided everything, seemed so near that if he strained his ears and held his breath he might hear them—yet at the same time they were so far away. He rose from the bed and, stretching out his hands, said:

It is true I was severe, but did that prevent her from doing just what she wanted? I waived a father's dignity. I quietly bent my neck when she, not fearing my curses, went away . . . there. And you, did you not implore her with tears in your eyes, until I commanded you to dry them? Was it my fault that she was born so cruel? Did I not teach her about God and humility and love?"

Father Ignaty looked for a moment into his wife's eyes and turned away. "What could I do with her if she did not want to tell us of her sorrow? Command her? I did command. Forgive her? I forgave. Should I have gone down on my knees to her, and cried like an old woman? How could I know what was in her mind? Cruel, heartless daughter?" He laughed silently.

"She loved us! As a proof, that was the sort of death she chose. A cruel, shameless death! She died in the dust . . . in the dirt . . . like a dog that had been spurned." His voice sounded soft and hoarse.

"I am ashamed to go out into the street. I am ashamed to leave the altar. I am ashamed before God. Cruel, worthless daughter! I ought to curse you in your grave!"

When he looked at his wife he found her unconscious, and she did not recover for several hours. When she opened her eyes it was impossible to tell whether she remembered what Father Ignaty had said to her or not. That same night—it was a July moonlit night, quiet, warm, and still—he crept up the stairs on tiptoe so that his wife and the nurse should not hear him, and went into Vera's room. The windows had not been opened since her death, and the air was hot and stuffy, with a faint smell of burnt iron from the hot roof. There was something dead and neglected about this room from which the inhabitant had been absent so long. The wooden walls, the furniture and other objects emitted a faint mustiness. The moonlight fell in a broad beam through the window, and was reflected from the white, spotless boards; the half light lit up the corners of the room; and the clean, white bed, with its small and large pillow, seemed transparent and ethereal. Father Ignaty opened the window and let in a draught of air that smelt of earth, the distant river, the flowering lime; the cows were heard lowing.

listening to his own words as though not he, but Vera, were talking:

"Vera, my daughter! Do you know what that word daughter means? Little one! Flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood! My darling! Your old father . . . grey and weak. . . ." His shoulders heaved and his body shook convulsively. Giving way to his feelings, he murmured gently as though to a child:

"Your old father . . . forgives you . . . no, Vera, . . . implores you. He is crying . . . he has never cried before. Your sorrow, little one, . . . your sufferings are mine. More than mine!"

He shook his head.

"More, Verotchka. What is death to an old man like me? But you . . . if only you knew how weak and gentle and timid you are! Do you remember when you pricked your finger and the blood came and you cried? My little one, I know you love me. You love me very much. Every morning you kiss me. Tell me! Tell me what tortures your poor soul, and I . . . with both these hands . . . I will smother your sorrow. These hands are still strong, Vera."

He shook back his hair. "Tell me!" he said, looking up and stretching out his hands. "Tell me!"

It was still in the room; from the dim distance the prolonged whistle of a river steamer could be heard. Father Ignaty looked round with wide-open eyes as though before him stood the terrible ghost of that mangled body. He slowly rose to his feet and, with an uncertain movement, raised his hand, with its strained outspread fingers, to his head. Going towards the door he whispered brokenly:

"Tell me!"

But his answer was silence.

Vera's grave was at the back of the cemetery, where the gravel paths ended, and Father Ignaty wandered long among the narrow paths which ran in broken lines through the green mounds, forgotten and neglected by all. The old heavy gravestones, green with age, and the broken railings seemed to press viciously into the earth.

Vera's grave also was oppressed by a stone. It was covered with new yellow turf, but all around was green. A mountain ash and a maple mingled together near by, and a broad-spreading clump of hazel trees, with its leafy rustling branches, threw a deep shade over the grave. Sitting down near it, on a neighbouring grave, he glanced around and looked up at the clear cloudless sky where hung the sun, immovable, like a huge flat disc. He felt here that peculiar stillness that reigns only in cemeteries when there is no wind and the dying leaves make no sound ; and again there occurred to him the thought that this was not stillness but silence. It penetrated the brick walls of the cemetery, and settled over the town, and the end of it was there in the grey, steadfast, silent eyes. He was cold, but bracing himself he looked down on Vera's grave. Long he gazed on that short yellow grass—grass taken from the open fields over which played the wind, and not yet accustomed to this new soil. He could not imagine that there under the grass, only two yards away from him, lay Vera. And this nearness seemed unattainable to him and filled his soul with agitation and unrest. The thing he had been accustomed to think had disappeared for ever into the dark depths of eternity was here beside him . . . and it was difficult to realise that she was not and never would be. It seemed to him that if he but uttered the words that were on his lips, or made a single gesture, Vera would come out of her grave and stand before him, tall and beautiful as ever. And not only Vera would arise, but all the dead with her : the dead that were so terribly expressive in their triumphant, cold silence.

He took off his hat, passed his hand through his hair, and whispered : " Vera ! "

He felt apprehensive lest any stranger should overhear him, and standing on the grave he looked over the tops of the crosses. There was nobody in sight, and he repeated loudly : " Vera ! "

It was Father Ignaty's old voice, dry and commanding, and it was strange that a command uttered with such force should receive no response.

" Vera ! " Loud and insistent sounded the voice, and when he was silent it seemed to him that from somewhere down below there sounded a faint reply. Once more he looked round, shook back the hair from about his ears, and laid his head against the cruel, prickly turf.

" Vera, tell me ! "

With terror he felt that into his ear there flowed something like the coldness of the grave that benumbed his brain, and Vera spoke ; but she spoke with the same prolonged silence. It became still more terrible and agitating, and when with difficulty—pale as a corpse—he lifted his head from the ground, it seemed to him that the air vibrated with a resounding silence, as if a wild storm had arisen on this awful sea. The silence was suffocating him ; its icy waves rolled over his head and ruffled his hair ; it beat against his breast, moaning under the blows. Trembling in every limb, he glanced round sharply and, rising slowly, made a great effort to straighten his back and to give a proud carriage to his shaking body ; and he succeeded in this. Deliberately he shook the dust from his knees, put on his hat, made the sign of the cross three times over the grave, and with a firm step walked away ; but he did not recognise the familiar paths of the cemetery. “ I have lost myself,” he thought, and smiled bitterly as he stopped at the crossways. He remained still only for a second and, without considering, turned to the left, because to stand still and wait was intolerable. The silence was pursuing him. It rose from the green graves ; the gloomy grey crosses exhaled it ; it rose in thick suffocating streams from every corner of that earth filled with dead. Father Ignaty quickened his pace. Dizzily he wound his way about the same paths, jumping over graves, climbing over railings, and tearing flesh and clothes on the metal wreaths. One thought only possessed him : to get away from the cemetery. He wandered from side to side, and at last began to run softly, with his hair floating in the wind, and tall and strange in his flowing robe. Any one meeting this wild figure, running, jumping, waving its arms, with a mad look on its face and the hoarse sound that came from its open mouth, would have been more frightened than if they had seen an actual ghost. Finally, Father Ignaty got out into the little square at the end of which glimmered the small cemetery church. An old man was dozing on a bench by the porch—from the look of him a pilgrim from a distant part—and near by two old beggars gesticulated, quarrelling and abusing each other.

When Father Ignaty got to the house it was already dark, and in Olga Stepanovna’s room a lamp was burning. Without taking off his torn and dusty hat and robe, he went up to his wife quickly, and fell down on his knees by the bed.

“ Mother . . . Olga . . . Have pity on me ! ” he sobbed. “ I am going mad ! ” And he beat his head against the bed-rail tempestuously, agonising like a man who had never cried before. He raised his head, prepared to see a miracle, thinking that his wife would speak words of pity.

“ My dear ! ” His huge body bent towards his wife and met the

look of the grey eyes. In them there was neither pity nor anger. Perhaps his wife had forgiven him, and pitied him, but in her eyes there was neither pity nor forgiveness. They were dumb and silent.

.

And silent was the dark, empty house.

LEONID N. ANDREYEV

THE GRAND SLAM

THEY played vint¹ three times a week : on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. Sunday was a most suitable day for card play but had to be set apart for other duties, such as visits and the theatre, wherefore it was considered the dullest day in the week. However, in the country, in the summer, they played on Sundays as well.

They played as follows : the corpulent and hot-tempered Maslenikov played with Jacob Ivanovitch, and Evpraksia Vassileona partnered her brother, the morose Prokopi Vassilevitch. This arrangement was of long standing, six years or more, and was due to Evpraksia Vassileona. The reason was that to play against her brother gave no sort of interest, for if one lost, the other won, and although the stakes were insignificant, and Evpraksia and her brother were comfortably off, yet she never could understand the use of playing a game for the game's sake, and was always pleased when she won. Her winnings were always placed apart, and appeared far more important and precious to her than the large sums she disbursed on house-keeping or on the rent of their expensive flat.

The players always assembled in Prokopi Vassilevitch's flat, for it was large, and he lived there alone with his sister—there was also a large white cat, but he always slept in an arm-chair—and the necessary silence reigned in the rooms. Prokopi Vassilevitch was a widower : he lost his wife in the second year of their marriage, and for two months after lay sick in a hospital for mental affections. Evpraksia was unmarried, though she had once had a romance with a student. No one knew, and she, it appears, had forgotten, why she never married her student ; but each year when the appeal for needy students appeared she sent a hundred-rouble note, "From an unknown Friend." In age she was the youngest of the party : forty-three years old.

¹ A kind of auction bridge in which the declarer only scores his contract even if he makes more tricks. After the original deal, players are allowed to exchange some cards (as in nap) with a view to improving the hands.

When the original arrangement of partners was made, Maslenikov, the eldest of the four, was especially displeased with it. He was annoyed at always having to play with Jacob Ivanovitch, that is, in other words, to lose all hope of ever making a grand slam in no trumps. In every way he and his partner were entirely unsuited. Jacob Ivanovitch was a dried-up little old man, dressed summer and winter in dark coat and trousers, and was silent and severe. He always appeared punctually at eight o'clock, not a moment before or after, and straightway took the pack in his dried-up fingers, on one of which was a large diamond ring. But what annoyed Maslenikov most in his partner was that he refused to make a higher contract than four tricks, even if his hand was certainly worth more.

Once it happened that Jacob Ivanovitch started with the two of a suit and led right through the suit up to the ace, taking all thirteen tricks. Maslenikov threw his cards angrily on the table, his partner picked them up quietly and wrote down his winnings for making a contract of four tricks.

"But why didn't you declare grand slam?" shouted Nicholas Dimitrievitch (that was Maslenikov's name).

"I never bid more than four," returned his partner drily; "you never can tell what will happen."

So Maslenikov could never convince him. He himself always took risks, and as he was a bad card holder, always lost, but he never lost heart, invariably hoping to win next time. At last he got reconciled to his partner and they played happily enough together. Nicholas Dimitrievitch took risks, and his partner quietly wrote down his losses and bid up to four tricks.

In this way they played, summer and winter, spring and autumn. Outside the doddering old world pursued its varied career, now red with blood, now drenched with tears, leaving in its track the groans of the sick, naked, and wronged. Some faint suggestion of all this was brought by Nicholas Dimitrievitch. Sometimes he was late and came in when the others were already seated at table, the pink cards laid fanwise on the green cloth.

Nicholas Dimitrievitch, red cheeked, and carrying an atmosphere of fresh air with him, hurriedly occupied his place opposite Jacob Ivanovitch, excused himself, and said:

"What a crowd there is on the Boulevard. Just a constant stream. . . ." Evpraksia Vassileona considered it her duty as hostess not to notice the idiosyncrasies of her guests. Thus she alone answered, while Jacob Ivanovitch shuffled the pack in grim silence, and her brother saw about tea.

"Yes, probably,—the weather's lovely. But hadn't we better start?" And they began. The lofty room, destroying all sound by its soft upholstery and door-hangings, became silent as the tomb.

The maid moved silently about on the soft carpet, carrying glasses full of strong tea, and nothing was heard but the *frou-frou* of her starched apron, the scrape of the scoring chalk, and Nicholas Dimitrievitch's sigh as he paid a large fine. Very weak tea was poured out for him and placed on a special table, as he liked to drink out of a saucer, with long sips.

In the winter he would inform them that there had been ten degrees of frost in the morning and that now there were twenty, and in summer would say :

"A large party has just gone off into the forest with hampers." Evpraksia Vassileona would look politely at the sky—in the summer they played on the terrace—and though the sky was clear, and the tops of the fir trees glistened in the sun, would remark : "I hope it won't rain." And Jacob Ivanovitch solemnly shuffled the cards, and dropping the two of hearts, reflected that Nicholas Dimitrievitch was flighty and incorrigible. At one time, especially, Maslenikov used to upset his partner. Every time he came he would make one or two remarks about Dreyfus. With a lugubrious expression he would inform them :

"Dreyfus's case is going badly." Or, on the other hand, he would tell them smiling that the sentence was unjust and would doubtless be changed. Then he would bring out the paper and start reading certain passages about Dreyfus.

"Read it already," Jacob Ivanovitch would remark drily, but his partner, paying no attention, would read out what he thought interesting and important. Once he roused the others to argument and almost to strife, as Evpraksia Vassileona refused to acknowledge the legality of the proceedings and demanded his immediate release, while Jacob Ivanovitch and her brother insisted that certain formalities must be observed first. Jacob Ivanovitch was the first to remember himself, and, pointing at the table, said : "Isn't it time ?"

So they started to play, and thereafter, however much Nicholas Dimitrievitch talked of Dreyfus, he was answered by complete silence.

So they played, summer, winter, spring, autumn. There were incidents, but chiefly of an amusing character. Sometimes Prokopi Vassilevitch would forget altogether what his partner had said, and once having contracted for five tricks failed to make one. Then Nicholas Dimitrievitch laughed loudly and magnified his loss, while Jacob Ivanovitch remarked drily : "If you'd only gone four you'd have been nearer getting it."

Intense excitement was always displayed when Evpraksia Vassileona contracted for slam. She grew red, trembled, not knowing which card to play, and looked piteously at her taciturn brother,

while her two opponents, with knightly courtesy for her womanhood and helplessness, encouraged her with condescending smiles and waited patiently. Generally speaking, however, they took the game very seriously. To them the cards had long ceased to be mere inanimate objects. Each hand, and every card in that hand, had its own particular individuality and lived its own life. Hands were liked and disliked, lucky and unlucky. The cards always combined differently, and these combinations were subject to no analysis or laws, but at the same time strictly fair ; and in that fairness existed the individuality of the cards as opposed to the individuality of the players. The players used them for their own ends, and the cards did their share, as if animated by their own wishes, tastes, sympathies and caprices. Hearts usually went to Jacob Ivanovitch, and Evpraksia Vassileona's hand was usually full of spades, though she didn't like them at all. Sometimes the cards were capricious and Jacob Ivanovitch couldn't get away from spades, while Evpraksia Vassileona rejoiced in hearts, made high contracts and lost. Nicholas Dimitrievitch always held bad hands, and was ready to exchange any of his cards, which, like visitors in a hotel, were quite indifferent as to where they made a short stay. At times, for several evenings in succession, he could hold nothing but twos and threes, for which reason he was firmly convinced he could never make a grand slam, as the cards knew of his wish and thwarted him on purpose ; so he pretended it was a matter of complete indifference to him and tried to cut short the preliminary exchanges of cards, usually drawing sixes and sevens with a solitary picture card to tantalise him.

Evpraksia Vassileona concealed her feelings best, and Jacob Ivanovitch had long ago learnt to assume a philosophical indifference whatever his hand was, having a sovereign remedy in never going more than four. Nicholas Dimitrievitch alone had never learnt to conceal his annoyance at the capriciousness of the cards. As he fell asleep he would dream of winning a grand slam in no trumps : how on picking up his hand he found first ace, then king, then another ace. But when he sat down to play again his hand was full of small cards, in all of which he felt the sinister designs of fate. By degrees, sleeping and waking, he dreamed of making grand slam, till it became the strongest wish of his life.

Other incidents happened, not immediately connected with cards. Evpraksia Vassileona's white cat died, and by decision of his owner was buried in the garden underneath the lime trees. Then Nicholas Dimitrievitch disappeared for two whole weeks, and his partners did not know what to do, as three-handed vint was contrary to their habit and turned out to be boring. The cards themselves proved that by their unaccustomed groupings. When Nicholas Dimitrievitch

appeared again his red face, which had shown up so against his scanty white locks, had grown pale, and he seemed to have shrunk. He informed them that his son had been arrested for some offence and sent off to St. Petersburg. All were astonished, for they never knew he had a son: perhaps he had mentioned it some time or other, but they had forgotten all about it. Soon afterwards he again failed to appear, and on a Saturday, which day they were accustomed to play longer than usual,—and all learnt with astonishment that he had suffered from angina for a long time and had had a severe attack that day. But afterwards all went on as before, and the game became even more serious and interesting as Nicholas Dimitrievitch regaled them less with outside topics.

On the Thursday, however, there was a startling change. As soon as the game began Nicholas Dimitrievitch made a contract of five, and won not only his contract but a small slam, as Jacob Ivanovitch had an ace he'd kept quiet about. For some time after he held his usual cards, but then started a series of good cards in suits, as if the cards wished to see how pleased he would be. He bid to play for the game, and all were astonished, even the phlegmatic Jacob Ivanovitch. The excitement of Nicholas Dimitrievitch, whose fat fingers were trembling, infected the other players.

"What's up with you to-day?" said the gloomy Prokopi Vassilevitch, who feared good luck as the precursor of misfortune. Evpraksia Vassileona was delighted to think that Nicholas Dimitrievitch at length held good cards, and on hearing her brother spit on the floor three times to avert misfortune, cried: "Fi, fi! there's nothing exceptional in it, the cards must give every one a turn."

For a moment during the deal fortune seemed to have deserted Nicholas Dimitrievitch, and a few twos turned up, but then followed aces, kings, and queens with great rapidity. He hardly had time to pick up the cards and begin the game, misdealing twice in his agitation, so that they had to have a fresh deal. All his bids were successful, though Jacob Ivanovitch kept obstinate silence about his aces: astonishment had given place to doubt in his partner's change of fortune, and he remained constant to his role,—not to contract more than four. He no longer thought of his leads, but boldly bid grand slam, certain that the exchanges would give him the cards he wanted.

After Prokopi Vassilevitch had dealt, Maslenikov picked up his cards. His heart almost stopped beating and a mist rose before his eyes—he held twelve certain tricks in his hand: the clubs and hearts from ace to ten, the ace and king of diamonds. If only he

could pick up the ace of spades in the exchange he had the grand slam in no trumps.

"Two no trumps," he began, controlling his voice with difficulty.

"Three spades," said Evpraksia Vassileona, who was almost as excited, having nearly all the spades from the king downwards.

"Four hearts," retorted Jacob Ivanovitch drily. Nicholas Dimitrievitch promptly declared small slam, but Evpraksia Vassileona, carried away by excitement, bid grand slam in spades, though she saw she could not make it. Nicholas Dimitrievitch reflected for a moment, and affecting an air of triumph to conceal his agitation, declared "Grand slam no trumps."

Nicholas Dimitrievitch declaring grand slam no trumps! All were astonished, and the hostess's brother exclaimed:

"Oho!"

Nicholas Dimitrievitch stretched out his hand to draw a card, but swayed and knocked over a candle. Evpraksia Vassileona picked it up, and Nicholas Dimitrievitch sat motionless one second, placed his cards on the table, and fell slowly to the left. Falling, he knocked over the table on which the tea was standing and lay across it on the floor.

When the doctor arrived he found that Nicholas Dimitrievitch had died from heart failure, and, by way of comforting the living, added a few words on the painlessness of his death. They placed the dead man on a sofa in the card-room, and covered by a sheet he looked large and fearful. One leg was not covered by the sheet and looked as if it belonged to another man: a large piece of paper stuck to the sole of the black boot. The card-table had not been cleared and the cards lay face down on it, those of Nicholas Dimitrievitch in a neat pile as he had laid them down.

Jacob Ivanovitch walked about the room with small uncertain steps, trying not to look at the corpse or go off the carpet on to the polished parquet, where his heels made a nerve-racking noise. After passing the table several times he stopped and picked up Nicholas Dimitrievitch's cards, looked at them, and put them down in a neat pile as before. Then he looked at the card Nicholas Dimitrievitch would have drawn: it was the ace of spades, which would have given him the grand slam. Walking up and down a few times more, Jacob Ivanovitch went into the next room, sat down and wept because the dead man's fate appeared to him so pitiable. Shutting his eyes, he tried to picture Nicholas Dimitrievitch's face as it was in life when he won and was happy. Especially sorry was he when he remembered the dead man's longing to win grand slam in no trumps. The events of the evening passed in review before him, beginning with the five diamonds which the deceased had won and ending with this series of good cards, so

exceptional as to be ominous. And here Nicholas Dimitrievitch lay dead when he might have made grand slam.

But what appeared to him most pitiable was that Nicholas Dimitrievitch would never know that the ace of spades was waiting to be drawn and that he held grand slam in his hand. Never! It seemed to him he had never before realised what death was, but now he saw how irrational, terrible, and unavoidable it was. Would never know! Even if Jacob Ivanovitch was to shout in his ear, weep, and show him the cards he would never know because he existed no more on the earth. Just one moment more of life and he would have seen the ace of spades, but he was dead without knowing it.

"Ne—ver," said Jacob Ivanovitch, pronouncing the word slowly, syllable by syllable, to convince himself of its reality and meaning. The word existed and had meaning, and was so horrible and bitter that Jacob Ivanovitch again fell back in his chair and wept. He played the hand for Nicholas Dimitrievitch, picking up the tricks one by one till he had all thirteen, and thought how large the score would have been and that the dead would never know it. It was the first and last time that Jacob Ivanovitch went more than his contract of four, and won the grand slam in the name of friendship.

"You here, Jacob Ivanovitch?" said Evpraksia Vassileona as she entered the room, and sitting at the table, burst into tears—"how horrible, how horrible."

They looked at each other and wept in silence, feeling that on the sofa in the next room lay the deceased, cold, heavy, and dumb.

"Have you sent the news?" asked Jacob Ivanovitch.

"Yes, my brother went with the maid, but I don't know how they will find the flat—we don't know the address."

"But doesn't he live in the same flat as last year?" asked Jacob Ivanovitch in consternation.

"No, he moved. The maid says he used to hire an isvoshchik (small carriage) on the Boulevard."

"You'll find the address through the police," said Jacob Ivanovitch soothingly. "He has a wife, hasn't he?"

Evpraksia Vassileona looked pensively at Jacob Ivanovitch without answering. He thought the same idea was in her mind as in his. He sniffed once more, put his handkerchief in his pocket, and raising his eyebrows interrogatively over his swollen eyes, asked: "And where shall we find a fourth now?"

But Evpraksia Vassileona did not hear him. Her practical mind was at work, and after a moment's silence she asked, "And do you live in the same place, Jacob Ivanovitch?"

LEONID N. ANDREYEV

LAUGHTER

I

At half-past six I felt sure that she would come, and I was anxiously cheerful. My overcoat, secured by the upper button only, flapped in the cold wind, but I did not feel the cold. I carried my head proudly erect with my student's cap pushed right back. My eyes glanced with a sort of patronage and bravado upon the men I met, while at the women I looked appealingly and endearingly in spite of the fact that I had loved her only four days. I was so young and my heart was so rich that I could not remain altogether indifferent to other women. And I walked rapidly, boldly, and lightly.

At a quarter to seven my overcoat was fastened by two buttons, and I looked at the women only—no longer endearingly, but rather with aversion. I wanted to see but one woman, the rest might go to the deuce—they were only in the way. Their resemblance to her seemed to lessen my confidence in myself and touched me to the wavering point.

At five minutes to seven I began to feel warm.

At two minutes to seven I was growing cold.

At the stroke of seven I felt convinced that she would not come.

At half-past eight I was the picture of despair. My overcoat was all buttoned, the collar was up, and my cap pulled down over my nose, now blue with cold. My hair, moustache, and eyelashes were white with frost, and my teeth were chattering. From my shuffling gait and bent back I might be taken for a rather strong old man going back to the poorhouse from a visit to his friends.

It was she who had made this change! Oh, the devil! must not say that. Perhaps she was not allowed to come; perhaps she was sick, or perhaps she was dead. Dead! And I swearing at her!

II

"Eugenia too will be there to-night," said a fellow-student to me. He could have had no malice, since he could not have known that I had been waiting for Eugenia in the cold from seven until half-past eight.

"Is that so?" I replied. But to myself I burst out: "Oh, the devil!"

She would be there, at the evening party given by the Polozovs. I had never visited the Polozovs; but I then and there made up my mind to be at their house that night.

"Gentlemen!" I shouted gleefully, "this is Christmas Eve! Everybody is merry to-night—let us be merry, too."

"But how?" asked a fellow-student sadly.

"But where?" queried another.

"Let's dress up and go to all the parties given in town to-night," I suggested.

Joyous cries of assent immediately arose. They shouted and jumped and sang, and even thanked me for the idea. We collected all the ready money we had about us, and within half an hour ten of us students of the town were gathered together—regular dancing merry imps—making for the costumier's, whose shop we finally filled with laughter and the chill night air.

I wished for something dark, beautiful, with a shade of fine melancholy in it, and I asked the wig-maker for the costume of a Spanish nobleman.

The costume I received must have belonged to a very tall nobleman indeed, for I was completely lost in it, and I felt as if all alone in a vast empty parlour. I got out of it as quickly as I could and asked for another.

"Would you not like a clown's, parti-coloured, with bells?"

"A clown's!" I exclaimed contemptuously.

"Well, a bandit's, then, with a hat and a dagger."

A dagger! That suited my present state of mind. To my regret, however, the bandit whose clothes they gave me could scarcely have been of age. In all probability he must have been a spoilt child about eight years old. His hat hardly covered my head, and I had to be peeled out of his velvet trousers as from tights. The costume of a page was worthless—it was all stained, and a friar's was full of holes.

"What are you fussing about? Hurry up! It's getting late!" cried the other fellows, who were already dressed. There was only one costume left—that of a Chinese nobleman.

"Give me the Chinaman!" I cried, with a wave of my hand,

and they gave me the costume. I won't dwell on the idiotic coloured slippers, which were so small that only half my feet got into them, nor need I speak of the piece of pink silk which covered my head like a wig and fastened to my ears by strings, making them stand out like a bat's.

Then came the mask. Oh, that mask!

It had a nose, eyes, and a mouth, all in their proper places—but there was nothing human about it. It was a sort of physiognomy in the abstract. A human being could never look so calm as this looked, even in the grave. It expressed neither sadness nor merri-ment nor surprise—actually it expressed nothing. It looked at you straight and calmly, and as you looked at it irrepressible laughter took hold of you. When I put it on my comrades rolled on the couches for laughter, they fell on the chairs waving their hands. "That'll be the most original mask," they shouted. I was almost crying, but when I looked into the mirror I was seized with laughter myself. Yes, it would indeed be the most original mask.

"We must promise not to remove our masks under any circumstances," said one as we stepped out. "Upon our word of honour!"

"Upon our word of honour! Upon our word of honour!" we cried in chorus.

III

It was certainly a unique mask. Crowds followed me, turned me on all sides, jostled me, pinched me—and when, exhausted, I turned round angrily I was greeted with irrepressible laughter. All the way I was surrounded and oppressed by a roaring cloud of laughter; it moved with me, and I could not tear myself out of this ring of mad cachinnation. At times it caught me. I shouted, sang, and skipped, while the whole world whirled before my eyes as though I were drunk. And yet, how far off it all was from me! How lonely I was beneath that mask of mine!

At last they let me alone. We met at Polozov's. I looked at her; emotions of anger and fear, resentment and tenderness filled me.

"It is I," I whispered.

Her heavy eyelashes were raised slowly, she looked at me in amazement, a whole sheaf of black rays burst upon me—and then, suddenly, she burst into laughter, ringing, merry, bright like the sun in spring.

"It is I! It is I!" I repeated, and I smiled. "Why did you not come this evening?"

But she was laughing—laughing uncontrollably.

"I am so tired. My heart is filled with pain." I implored her to answer me.

But she kept on laughing. The black flash of her eyes grew dim, and her smile grew clearer and clearer. It was the sun—but a burning, merciless, harsh sun.

"What's the matter with you?" I said.

"Is it you?" she said, restraining herself. "How funny you look!" My shoulders were lowered and my head bent down. There was deep despair in my pose. She had turned to look at the young, joyous couples fleeting past us, the dying dawn of a smile on her face.

"It is a shame to laugh," I said. "Do you know that beneath my mask is a live, suffering face? It was but for the sake of seeing you that I put it on. You have given me hope for your love, and now you take it away so soon, so cruelly! Why did you not come?"

She turned to me quickly as if with a reply upon her sweet, smiling lips, but the sight of me set her off again into a fit of that cruel laughter. Hardly breathing, almost crying, she covered her face with her perfumed lace handkerchief. With difficulty she uttered her answer:

"Just look at yourself. Turn round to the mirror and look. Oh, what a face!"

I knit my brows and gritted my teeth together in pain. I felt that my face had frozen, and a deathly pallor seemed to creep over it. I glanced into the mirror—an idiotically calm, a stolidly indifferent, inhuman, immobile physiognomy stared at me. And I—I burst into laughter. And before the laughter had quite died away, but with a quiver of rising anger at the same time, I said, almost shrieking with the madness of despair:

"Why are you laughing?"

She became silent. I began to speak to her in a whisper of my love. I had never before pleaded so well, because I had never loved so deeply. I spoke of the torture of waiting, of the poisonous tears of mad jealousy and of grief, of my soul which was all love. I saw how her eyelashes, lowering, had cast a heavy shadow on her cheeks, now grown pale. I saw how the fire from within her had cast a red reflection through this dull whiteness, and how her whole flexible body inclined involuntarily toward me. She was dressed as Queen of Night, and, all enigmatic, in black lace, as though clothed in darkness, glittering through the brilliancy of the stars, she was beautiful, like a forgotten dream of childhood. Still I spoke, and tears began to well into my eyes and my heart to beat with joy. And I noticed at last—I noticed that a gentle, pitiful smile parted her lips, while her eyelashes were lifted with a quiver. Slowly,

timidly, as if with infinite faith, she turned her little face towards me, and—I had never before heard such laughter as came from her.

"No, no, I can't!" she uttered, almost moaning, again bursting into a ringing cascade.

Oh, if only I could have a human face for a minute! I bit my lips, the tears were rolling down my burning cheeks, and this idiotic physiognomy of mine, in which everything—the nose, the eyes, and the lips,—so placid and calm, looked with unshaken indifference—it was terrible in its absurdity. I limped from her in my coloured slippers and heard her ringing laughter following me. It sounded as if a silver stream of water were falling from an immense height and dashing itself against a rock.

Scattered over the sleepy street, waking the silence of the night with our strong, excited voices, we were returning home. One of my comrades said to me: "You have made an enormous success. I have never in my life seen people laugh so. Hold on! What are you doing? Why are you tearing the mask? Say boys, he has gone mad! Look, he is tearing his costume! . . . He is crying!"

LEONID N. ANDREYEV

THE "MARSEILLAISE"

HE was a nonentity : the spirit of a hare and the shameless patience of an ox. When fate, jestingly and maliciously, threw him into our black ranks we laughed like madmen : some mistakes are so laughable, so absurd. And he—he of course wept. I never in my life met another man with such a supply of tears, or which flowed so readily—from his eyes, his nose, his mouth. He was just like a sponge, dipped in water and squeezed in your hand. I have seen men weep even in our ranks, but their tears were—fire, from which ran savage beasts. These manly tears aged the face but gave youth to the eyes : like lava, stirred up from the boiling heart of the earth, they burnt ineradicable traces and buried whole towns of insignificant wishes and petty cares in their career. But the only results of this man's tears were a red nose and wet handkerchief. Probably he dried them afterwards on the line, otherwise whence could he have procured a sufficiency of handkerchiefs ?

During all his days of banishment he dogged the authorities, all authorities, those who existed and those whom his imagination created, bowed to them, wept, swore he was innocent, begged them to pity his youth, promised never more to open his mouth except for petitions or singing in praise ; and they, like us, laughed at him, called him " the unhappy little swine," and shouted at him : " Ah, you little swine ! "

He ran obediently to every call : every time he expected to hear tidings of his speedy return to his native land, and they were only jesting. They knew, as we did, that he was innocent, but they thought by torturing him to frighten other little swine—as if they were not already sufficiently cowardly !

He even came to us, driven by animal fear of loneliness ; but our faces were hard and flintlike, and secretly he sought the key. Quaking he called us dear comrades and friends, and we, nodding our heads, said : " Take care ! They are listening to you."

And he would get up and look furtively through the door, that poor little swine. Well, could we keep serious then ? And we

laughed with voices long unused to laughter, but he took heart again, and sitting closer to us told us through his tears of his beloved books at home, of his mamma and brothers, of whom he knew nothing, whether they were alive or dead through grief and fear.

Eventually we would send him away.

When famine started, terror seized him, inexpressibly comic terror. You see the poor swine was very fond of eating, and was also very frightened of his dear comrades and the authorities: he wandered distractedly amongst us and frequently wiped his forehead with his handkerchief—either tears or perspiration, and asked me irresolutely:

"You are going to starve long?"

"A long time," I answered sternly.

"And you won't eat anything in secret?"

"Perhaps our mammas will send us cakes," I agreed seriously. He looked doubtfully at me, shook his head, and, sighing, went away. The next day, green with terror like a parrot, he announced:

"Dear comrades! I also will starve with you."

And there was a general answer:

"Starve alone."

And he starved! We did not believe it, we thought he ate something in secret, as the warders also thought. And when near the end he fell ill with hunger typhus we merely shrugged our shoulders: "Poor little swine!"

But one of us, the one who never laughed, said gloriously:

"He's our comrade. Let's go to him."

He was delirious, and his disconnected raving was pitiable as his life. He talked of his beloved books, of his mamma and brothers; he asked for cakes, swore he was innocent and begged for pardon. He called for his native country, called for dear France—oh, a curse on the feeble heart of man! He tore his soul with that cry: "Dear France!"

We were all in the hut when he died. Consciousness returned to him before death, and he lay there quietly, so small and feeble, and we, his comrades, stood round him. And all of us heard how he said:

"When I die, sing the *Marseillaise* over me."

"What are you saying?" we shouted, trembling partly with joy, partly with boiling anger. And he repeated:

"When I die, sing the *Marseillaise* over me."

And for the first time it happened that he was dry-eyed, and we—we wept down to the very last man, and our tears burnt like the fire from which run savage beasts.

He died, and we sang the *Marseillaise* over him. Strong, young voices sang the great song of freedom, and the mighty ocean

seconded us, carrying it on on its cresting waves to dear France, telling of present horror and crushed hope. And his memory ever remained famous to us,—that nonentity, with the body of a hare and the great soul of a man. On your knees before the hero, comrades and friends!

We sang. Rifles look down at us, their triggers glinting evilly and their sharp bayonets pointing at our hearts, and ever louder, ever happier rose the mighty song; the black coffin was gently lowered by tender hands.

We sang the *Marseillaise*.

(1903.)

MICHAIL P. ARTSIBASHEV

1878-1926

FROM A BASEMENT

I

ANTON the shoemaker stood bent, his long arms, gnarled and knotted like roots, hanging down by his side, while his customer, a young merchant's clerk, also stood in the middle of the basement—among scraps of leather, blocks and old boots, shaking his fist and screaming in exasperation at Anton :

“The devil only knows what they are ! The left boot pinches and the right creases ! Do you call these boots ? The devil knows what they are, they are not boots ! ”

He thrust the boots, soles upward, almost into Anton's face, and in his unnaturally strained voice could clearly be distinguished a desire to bully and command.

“Wait until you come to me for the money ! . . . You . . . ” the customer shouted, and irresolutely, but with spiteful pleasure, added : “beast ! ”

And from pleasure and apprehension the blood rushed to his face, so that his thick, short neck could not be distinguished from his red tie.

Anton, without a word, passed his awl from his right hand to his left and sighed deeply.

It was quite dark in the basement, and the air, thick and heavy, hung like a blue curtain. Beneath the ceiling and in the corners, mingling with the smell of leather, oil and wax, was a dense vapour. Only Anton's figure, a black, ragged silhouette, stood out against the faint light of the square window.

“Now I've told you what I think of you ! ” the customer shouted, and, panting, went out of the basement, bending his head so as not to dent the crown of his new bowler hat.

Anton accompanied him to the door and held it open while the customer went up the slippery winding stairs. Then he sighed still more deeply and went in again.

Though it was still light outside, the basement was clothed in a

dark blue half-light, so that all that could be seen was an empty pot containing a dry and withered onion stalk planted by some former tenant. Anton often looked at the poor sorry plant that was dying a slow death for want of sun and air, but somehow he did not like to throw it away.

He trimmed the little lamp with some thin matches, sighing deeply meanwhile.

He was not sighing because he had just been abused and had had the boots thrust in his face. He was so accustomed to such incidents that he scarcely remembered it. All his customers abused him in one way or another, threw their boots at him, struck him sometimes, and, what was more frequent, did not pay his money. They were all such little people, so dependent, so crushed and miserable, that they felt a vital necessity to shout at some one else in their turn, to bully and feel themselves above some one else. And Anton would have done exactly the same had any one depended on him as he depended on all. For this reason Anton unconsciously felt that it could not be otherwise, and that all must quarrel, swagger and bully, so that the petty animal spite in their cowardly, withered little souls should not suffocate them. But Anton never felt that he was to blame—he did what he could—as he could. He sewed boots no better and no worse than any one else, not so much by measurement as by rule of thumb. He did not even wonder whether he could have become a master of his trade because it was a dirty, hungry, monotonous, dull trade.

He sighed because living always in the damp, low basement amidst the smell of leather and wax, in hunger and without love, light, or joy, had crushed his whole being, and whenever he tried to straighten his back that ached from his bent position, it seemed to him that he raised some terrible, irresistible weight that would not let him breathe. “O—oh,” he would say at such times.

For a whole hour after his angry customer went he sat bent, mending the heels of the neighbouring dvornik’s heavy boots by the light of the smoky lamp, which flickered gently at the blows of his hammer. Then he got up, left his tools wherever they happened to fall, turned down the lamp, and went out to sit on the stairs, taking his concertina with him.

By now it was already dark even out of doors—blue and transparent above, black and dark below. The walls of the house, which stood like a well in which Anton lived, seemed pale and blue, as though dead; above them, somewhere higher up, was seen the darkening sky in which two or three stars twinkled faintly.

“Thus it is,” Anton thought, scarcely knowing why he did so, and shaking his head, he pulled out his concertina, bending his right ear towards it.

It gave out a faint squeaky sound, but to Anton it seemed so

loud that he looked round apprehensively. Then he took the concertina and played on the lower notes. He always began like that because he was not allowed to play out of doors, and with these cautious sounds he tried to ascertain whether the elder dvornik was at home.

And, as usual, at the open window of the dvornik's quarters a form appeared, seen dimly in the darkness, and a furious voice called out : "Again ! . . . You !"

Anton trembled, quickly put down the concertina, and picked up his cap guiltily. But the dvornik did not see him, and grumbling a little longer as a big dog growls, he disappeared from the window.

Anton let his hands hang between his legs and, picking at the holes in his boots, began to think. He wanted to play, and was thinking how nice it would be to go out of the town for the whole day one Sunday, sit down on a green bank by the railway line, and play to his heart's content, play so that his ears rang with the sound. He enjoyed the thought, though he knew perfectly well that he would never go out of town, because he would never have enough spare time. On holidays he spent his mornings buying leather, his afternoons in delivering his work to the customers, and in the evenings he was always drunk.

He sat on the stairs until it was quite dark and above, between the walls, the stars shone clearly and freely, while the walls were lit up from below with a yellow light from the windows. When he raised his head everything above seemed bright and gay and when he looked down it seemed darker and gloomier than ever. Anton gazed at the sky and the stars with a strange despairing yet joyful feeling, but the habit of sitting bent drew him down to fix his eyes on the blue darkness of the yard. From boredom and a burning desire for drink he tried to remember his past life, but it appeared dim and uninteresting. How he had got to this town he could hardly remember. The only things he remembered clearly of his childhood were blows from the shoemaker's lasts, running for vodka, the streets, and the police. Later, when he had grown up, he had run away from his master and had begun to live in corners and work for himself, pasting in his window the cutting of a lady's boot from an old magazine. Thus he had lived, year in, year out, drinking heavily, spending his nights in dens and police stations and being terribly beaten by the police. Then he had fallen in love with a neighbouring seamstress, though she laughed at him and called him a fool, saying that his shoemaker's last must have damaged his wits. Nevertheless, he gave up drinking, made himself a new shirt, and went to the baths. He was most persistent in his attentions to the seamstress without being able to express in words his feelings that were as sweet as music. One day he made a new pair of boots and

presented them to her. Then she began to call him Anton Vasilevitch and invited him to take tea with her. When she got to know how much he earned she began to sigh, weep, and worry over something, and told the dvornik's wife that she had no objection to Anton, and, on the contrary, was well disposed towards him. Anton's soul was filled with joy. He went to church, bought her nuts and chocolates, put on a new shirt, and was just about to go to the seamstress feeling that his grey life had been lit up with a soft caressing light, when the dvornik and a policeman came and took him to the police station. There he was questioned about a certain bundle and one Vanka Svistunov, and whether he had drunk beer on a certain day at eight o'clock in the evening at the Ivanov public-house on the St. Petersburg side and for which he had paid fifty kopeks. Then there were questions about his appearance.

Anton had seen no sort of bundle, knew no Vanka Svistunov, but had been to the public-house. As for the fifty kopeks, he looked like a donkey at the water, not understanding what it was all about.

In the end he found himself in prison, and, though innocent, remained there for six months, torn by a desire for freedom, light, and his seamstress, and oppressed by a sense of cruel injustice. When he came out, the light in his soul was so crushed by the prison dirt that he did not go to his seamstress, and only heard indirectly that she had "gone wrong" with a "nice gentleman."

Dull grief and despair took possession of his soul, the more difficult to bear because he did not understand it and did not know where to go—where it was better and where worse. Life became even more dull and monotonous than before, varied only by dull, mechanical drunkenness in which there was no pleasure and no gaiety.

He recalled all this as indifferently as though it had happened not to him but to some one else; nevertheless he felt depressed and seemed to regret something—he wanted to get drunk on vodka.

A window was opened on the second floor and a shaft of yellow light fell on the dark yard. The elegant muslin curtains were seen clearly, there was a sound of animated voices, then some one played quickly and loudly, laughed gaily, and banged the lid of the piano.

Anton listened intently to these strange, clear sounds until the window was shut and all grew quiet, then he mechanically touched his concertina, turning it over in his hand, and trying not to miss a single sound. It seemed to him that he would feel better if he could play. It was late; Anton sighed as usual and went to bed. He lay in bed with eyes open, thinking that he must pay for the leather, and how, the week before, the leather-seller, without any reason, had struck him on the mouth. His lips had swollen and the blood had appeared on his blue gums.

The heavy air penetrated through him, and grew thicker and colder. He dreamt that he was drunk and that a cab had run over him, the heavy wheels crushing him to the hard bridge.

II

The following day was Sunday and towards the evening Anton was already sitting in the public-house.

The mechanical organ was playing some tune, loud but not gay. The room was full of smoke ; the waiters darted to and fro ; people were shouting and laughing, though not with joy ; the click of the balls could be heard from the billiard-room. Anton went in there. He could not play, but he liked the game—the cloth was so green, the balls so pure and white and clicked against each other so merrily.

Two clerks were playing, and one of them, a tall young fellow, hit the balls so cleverly that Anton smiled with pleasure.

"Clever fellow !" he thought, looking with respect and envy at the clerk, who was perspiring with the effort.

"Why shouldn't I play too. . . . I am good at these things."

He felt quite affectionate towards the clerk.

But the clerk caught his cue against Anton's chest, missed his aim, and turned upon Anton fiercely :

"What the devil do you want here ? Isn't there room enough for you ? "

Anton grew timid and went away, a feeling of pain and insult in his heart.

"Poking his nose in here !" the clerk went on, chalking his cue.

"Go away, please, don't you see you are in the way," the marker considered it his duty to add, looking Anton up and down quickly with beady eyes.

"A beggar !" he mumbled, handing the cue to the player. Anton sniffed and grew red, moving further and further away until the back of his neck hit against the billiard-ball box, and then his confusion made him stand still, blinking nervously.

The others soon forgot about him. The players hit the balls, two boys of gloomy countenance were quarrelling about a certain twenty kopeks, the lamp over the billiard-table smoked darkly, and from the saloon was heard a boisterous melody by Heish. Anton grew calmer, began to look about him, and even asked the marker for a light. The marker scratched himself, thought for a moment, and then said :

"There are always matches on the table for that purpose."

But Anton very much wanted to talk. Since the night before he had felt sad for some reason or other, and the vodka he had drunk far from banishing this sadness, seemed to oppress him.

"It is dull without company," he said in an ingratiating voice as he lit a cigarette, and by his face the marker could see that he wanted to offer him one but was afraid. And for this very reason the marker looked at him with unfeigned contempt, smiled, and went away.

Anton blinked still more quickly and walked into the saloon. There he asked for another half-bottle of vodka, drank it all, and then sat for a long time hanging his head and gazing bitterly at a green cucumber that lay before him on a plate. By the well-known din in his ears and the fact that sounds about him seemed to come from afar, Anton understood that he was drunk, and this annoyed him as though some one else was to blame, some one who was constantly annoying and insulting him.

"I am a working man!" he thought, "and I want to cry and complain to some one." The musical box made him sadder and sadder, and Anton, shaking his head and pressing his cheeks firmly against his hands, began to sing incoherently without words or tune. The song seemed very nice and touching to him; tears appeared in his eyes.

"You mustn't sing or make yourself a nuisance here!" a waiter said, slipping over to Anton in his soft shoes.

"Why not?" Anton asked in aggrieved amazement, raising his dim tearful eyes.

"Because!" the waiter replied, adding, "Will you go out, please?"

"But why?" Anton repeated with greater amazement and a rising irritation.

"You are making yourself a nuisance. Will you go, please?" the waiter continued, obstinately.

Anton grew timid and rose.

"Very well . . . I'll go. A workman can't sit anywhere. H'm. . . . Very strange . . ." he muttered, trying to find his cap that had fallen down near his chair.

"It's all right, it's all right," the waiter said.

Anton staggered out of the saloon, and the feeling of insult grew greater and greater, causing his drunken brain almost physical suffering. The waiter followed him, but staggering between the tables, Anton turned and flew into the billiard-room. By then he was so drunk that he could scarcely see or understand anything; before his eyes there was a kind of orange mirage in which floated faces, sounds, voices and balls quickly flying over a green cloth. The waiter stood watching by the door, but some one called him and he vanished. Anton, with legs wide apart and head dropped, stood staring dully at the billiard-table, trying to understand what it all meant, not only the billiard-table but also the things happening within him. The very same clerk who had knocked against and

abused Anton appeared before his eyes, and Anton stared at him mechanically.

"A cannon at the top of the table!" the clerk shouted, and at the same moment Anton remembered his face and the aimless sense of injury that tortured him suddenly found an outlet

"Allow me," he said suddenly, going up to the billiard-table and leaning right over it.

"What?" the clerk asked mechanically, and without waiting for a reply pushed Anton away with his shoulder and shouted, "the fifteenth in the right corner!"

"What is in the . . . right?" Anton asked with a senseless viciousness.

"Go away, go away, please!" the marker interposed, putting a cue between them. But Anton pushed the cue away with his hand and without removing his swollen eyes from the clerk, continued:

"No, this is . . . I also want to play. I also want to . . . that . . . to the right! Why shouldn't a workman . . . if he likes?"

The marker took him by the elbows.

"Let go . . . why are you holding me? He pushed me . . . a working man! My hands are black," Anton said tearfully, showing his black, gnarled fingers. "A working man . . . he pushed. . . . I want to know why a working man can't go to the right!"

"Ugh, the drunken beast?" the clerk laughed. "Marker, what are you looking at?"

"Get out!" the marker said angrily, seizing Anton by the shoulder.

And suddenly the sense of insult in Anton reached a tremendous intensity.

"Let go!" he cried in an oppressed voice between clenched teeth, and tore himself away forcibly so that his coat was rent. "He pushed me and I am being seized!" he shouted in a firm, sober voice, and swept the balls off the billiard-table with his hand.

The balls flew over the edge, but Anton had already been grabbed by the arm, knocked down, and dragged along the half-dark corridor.

"Let go! . . . You devils!" he cried.

Some one struck him a heavy blow on the jaw and the salt blood instantly filled his mouth, and a voice, the clerk's, as it seemed to Anton, cried:

"That's right. Splendid!"

And at the same moment Anton saw before him the open door leading to the street and the fresh damp air blew on his face.

"You liar!" Anton said hoarsely, clutching the doorpost with his bent fingers.

But his hands were thrust aside, and receiving a blow on the back

of his neck that made the whole world spin round, he flew out into the darkness and emptiness, rolled over the pavement, hit his knees on the curb-stones, and rolled heavily down the bridge.

"Take care, you devil!" a frightened cabman cried in a thin voice, and Anton heard somewhere near him the frightened snorting and soft warm odour of a horse. He staggered up, spitting blood. There was a ringing in his ears, stars danced before his eyes, and his jaw trembled with the pain. Mechanically he touched his damp knees and could not make out whether it was blood or water.

"So," he said aloud bitterly; was silent a moment, and added, "So, it seems. . . ."

And now he saw clearly and consciously that life—his unhappy bitter life—abused him always and unceasingly. He shed tears and shook his clenched fist at the shut door.

"A working man!" he said through his tears as he walked down the street, and he felt himself infinitely unfortunate and insulted. He turned the corner into the main street and again reached the front entrance of the public-house, where the porter stood in his shining cap and a bright lamp was burning, and the cabmen were quarrelling amongst themselves. At this moment the two clerks came out, having finished their game, and, smoking cigarettes, walked down the street. Anton caught sight of them and grew dazed at the terrible, still unconscious impulse that seized him, and then, fumbling for his shoemaker's knife in his pocket, and staggering on feeble legs, he ran after them.

There were many people about—laughing women—an officer who pushed Anton aside—two workmen who made way for him, but Anton saw nothing. With a terrible clearness there danced before his eyes the bowler hat that receded along the street. At one moment he nearly lost sight of it; his way was barred, but running in the road he caught them up after passing two or three groups.

They were laughing, and one of them, not the one who had pushed Anton, said:

"There she is, Mashka!"

And they stopped near a woman in a large red hat, which shook fantastically in the uncertain light of the lantern.

"Where are you going?" she asked in a hoarse contralto, and at this moment Anton caught them up, and thrust his knife into the clerk's back with all his strength, with all the weight of his body.

He had time to feel how for a moment the knife cut through the thick cloth, and with a creak reaching to the blade it penetrated through something elastic and firm that instantly turned soft and damp. He dropped the knife, and without knowing why or wherefore, ran away. He did not know whether the clerk had cried out

or not, but he saw in the lamplight a dark formless mass on the spot where a man had been a moment before. Then it seemed that the whole world, with hue and cry, set out to run after him.

Covered with a cold sweat, with wildly rolling eyes and in greatest animal terror, Anton rushed down a dark lane, flew down the length of the street without seeing what was happening behind him, but hearing the desperate shouting of many voices behind him.

Stamping and panting there came after him dvorniks, a policeman, and three workmen in shabby boots

"Stop him!" resounded terribly from one end of the street to the other.

Panting and choking with the saliva that filled his throat, he turned down one street after another, lurched heavily against some one in the road, and with protruding eyes and bathed in sweat, dashed down the tow-path of a dark dirty canal, the black water of which smelt cold and damp. The policeman who met him at the turning caught hold of him by the sleeve, but slipped and hit his sword against the damp paving-stones of the bridge.

Anton flew on, jumping over obstacles, squeezing through holes, roaring and panting like a wild, hunted animal. His terror imbued him with such strength that the cries of his pursuers and the piercing blasts of the whistle receded into the gloomy darkness that was scarcely dispersed by the faint yellow light of the street lamps.

Anton ran over a bridge, jumped to the other side of a ditch, frightening a stray dog, fell on his hands, jumped up and ran on to some dark desert place overgrown with dank grass, which swayed monotonously in the wind. Here it was dark and desolate, the lamps twinkled far away in front and behind him, while to one side was a dark mass that looked like a wood, whence issued the persistent mournful rustling of trees.

III

He lay in a ditch full of leaves the whole night; around him was only the soft rustling grass and above him the cold black sky drizzling with an unseen rain. Anton lay huddled up with cold, the cold water soaking through and through him, while hasty disconnected thoughts floated through his brain. One thing only was clear to him—his former life was finished—he could never go back to his basement again and resume his work. At first this idea was strange and terrible to him, but sooner than he himself realised it, a vague feeling of gladness arose in his soul.

"Is it all over?" he asked himself, and at the thought he even sat up.

"Fugh! . . . enough!" he said with a soft triumph, as though

bragging before some one who had long oppressed him, and his feeling of joy grew stronger and his sense of freedom drowned the fear and vague apprehension of the future.

The field was cold and deserted, but it was pleasant and the air was good.

In the morning, wet and dishevelled, he walked across the fields and wound his way through a long lane, to the other end of the town, where he had never been before. Because the place was unknown to him, it seemed lighter and more free. He walked along the sunny streets afraid, yet glad that he was not working at an hour when he usually worked; that he could do what he liked and not have to worry about paying for his basement, leather, and lasts. At first he was nervous and made way for every one, but, torn and dirty, he was a strange and terrible sight, and all willingly stepped away from him. He noticed this, and realising that he was terrifying, walked straight at people, enjoying a sensation unknown to him till then. The whole day he wandered about the streets, got some food at an eating-house, and in the afternoon went out to the fields, where he lay on on the dry grass thinking in the sun.

At the bottom of the fields and over the whole horizon were slender, red factory chimneys, and the smoke from them hung over the town like a thick curtain. In the field it was light and still. The dark mass that he had taken to be a wood at night was a cemetery. He could see, from where he lay, the tiny toy-like crosses and memorials gleaming white against the golden leaves of the birches. Anton lay face downwards in the ditch, and raising his head, looked out on the cemetery.

He tried to imagine terrible things, but simply felt tranquil, free and at ease. He had no fear of the police, because the prison life that he knew was better than the life of cold, hunger, boredom and injustice that he had experienced in freedom. Of the fact that he had killed a man he thought little and vaguely. He was too dull and blind to understand the scene of the previous night in all its horror. He had no feeling of remorse or pity; on the contrary, he was possessed by a vague triumphant feeling of being unusually bold and desperate. It was as though he had said to some one:

"So that is what you . . . Then there you are!"

It was only towards evening, when deep, pensive shadows crept over the field, when the golden cemetery grew dark and the white crosses merged into the brown mass, that Anton grew sad. He began to breathe heavily and turned from side to side in the ditch. He regretted something, something good and pure. He turned over on his back and looked up into the distant fathomless sky, in which the cold transparent sunset was melting away. It was thence, from the eternally pure space, that the sadness came. Then he got

up in the ditch, black and dishevelled, and climbed out on to the banks ; the field was dark and desolate.

" If . . . then . . . " he said aloud, waving his hand with a feeling of despair and an ache in his heart.

Then he made his way to the town, staggering as he walked, and looking round obstinately and heavily, with a deep frown, as though he were looking for some one's throat to fly at.

Over the broad fields, the strong, free wind blew evenly and sadly.

MME. ESTAFIEVA

VANIA

WITH her pretty, rosy little face buried deep in the sofa pillow, Milochka cried bitterly. Fate had cruelly and unexpectedly brought the first grievous disappointment of her young life. She had impatiently awaited the day when she was to become sixteen years of age and would change from a little girl into a young lady ; would put on for the first time a long white muslin dress and go to her first ball.

She had been dreaming of this event for a long time ; but that morning, suddenly, her mother told her that she would not get the dress, and that the ball was not even to be thought of, as their means would not permit such an expenditure.

This was a terrible blow for poor Milochka. From her early childhood the pet of the whole family, she did not know what it was to be refused anything. Up to a very short time before, she had been surrounded with luxury, and somehow she could not become used to the thought that, with her father's death, the means for the life of opulence were at an end ; and that in the year and a half that had passed since he had been so suddenly taken from them, the few thousands he had left had been spent, and they were now compelled to start a new and very different mode of living.

She had come home from boarding-school for the Christmas holiday, full of joyous anticipation of her first ball, and now all her dreams were cruelly shattered. It was terrible.

Preparations for Christmas were going on in the house, but Milochka, who was wholly engrossed in her own sorrow, did not pay any attention to them. At times she lifted her tear-stained, charming little face from the pillow and addressed her brother Vania, a youth of nineteen, dressed in the uniform of a high-school boy, and repeated with a voice full of despair.

"You understand, Vania, that this had been my dream, my sweetest dream !" and forgetting her sorrow for a moment, she continued : "I and Tania. You remember Tania ? A cunning little red-haired thing !"

Vania nodded his head.

"I and Tania always talked about our first ball, and decided that she would get a pink dress and I a white one, but mother told me to-day that if I even got the dress she could not take me to the ball, as she hasn't anything decent to wear, having sold all her nice gowns. I shall not be able to go to my first ball, my beautiful first ball," she added tearfully, and burying her head once more in the pillow she broke into weeping anew.

Vania stood thoughtfully looking at his sister, then he turned and went into the corridor with a nervous, ungainly gait. In passing Anna's (his step-mother's) room he anxiously looked at the door as if trying to assure himself that he would be able to slip out unnoticed, and hastily began to put on his coat.

"Oh, leave me alone!" he heard Anna's angry voice. "I have told you again and again that we shall not have any Christmas tree this year, and if you do not stop crying I shall drive you out of the room."

But this energetic warning evidently did no good, because a moment later he heard his step-mother exclaim in a sharper tone:

"So that is how you listen to what your mother tells you! Go into the nursery!" On the threshold Anna appeared, pushing angrily before her a little girl of five, who was crying as if her heart would break.

"And where are you off to now?" Anna turned to Vania in a displeased tone, seeing him dressed for the street in his coat and with cap in hand.

"I shall—I shall soon come back," replied Vania in a shaking voice, trying to avoid her eyes and awkwardly pulling at his cap.

"I do not like your continual absences," said Anna, gazing with cold, almost hostile eyes at her step-son. "I cannot understand where you are going all the time. For two months now you have been at home only during meals; you do not even find it necessary to tell me where you go. And you know well that the whole responsibility for your behaviour falls upon me. People will say that I am a bad mother to you."

"But I assure you that I am not doing any wrong, mother, I am simply going to my lessons."

"To-day you could have stayed at home just as well; you know that there is a great deal of work in the house just before the holidays. You could be of some help to me. By the way, why do you always lock your door lately?"

Vania became very confused and blushed.

"I have in there—I am afraid that Sonia and Mitia will tear my books and papers——"

"How thoughtful you are! Since when have you become so careful of your books?" she asked ironically, and turning abruptly she entered the nursery with the whimpering child.

Vania looked after the retreating figure of his step-mother for a moment, and pulling his cap down over his head he quickly left the house.

In the dining-room Milochka was still crying. In the nursery the two smaller children, Mitia and Sonia, were vying with each other in telling the nurse about the lovely big Christmas tree they had had a long, long time ago. They complained bitterly and sadly that the dear Lord had taken their papa away, and mother said that they would never again have a Christmas tree.

The old nurse tried to comfort the children as well as she could, gently stroked their pretty, curly heads and told them of the wonderful Child who had been born many centuries ago in the manger, of the great Star which had appeared in the sky and had led the shepherds and the Wise Men to that place where rested the Redeemer. She spoke to them of the Wonderful Infant long and earnestly, and the children pressed close to her, forgetting their own sorrow and listening to the simple narrative of their old nurse with delight and curiosity.

In the meanwhile Anna was sitting with sadly bowed head upon her still unmade bed. A long string of memories flooded her mind. She recollected her free, joyous childhood in her father's house, her girlhood, the years she had spent at college surrounded by loving friends. At last she had reached her long-wished-for sixteenth year; she was now a young lady in long skirts. How bright and enticing seemed to her the future! Her heart beat joyously, longing for the unknown but very sweet future. She was only seventeen when she married a young widower with a year-old child by his first wife.

She had loved her husband passionately and was very happy in her married life. If they quarrelled at times, it was only on account of Vania; she could not reconcile herself to the idea that another woman had loved him and was loved by him only such a short time ago, and that this other woman had left him a pledge of their love, a little boy whom the father adored. This boy, a capricious, homely, obstinate child, Vania, who always looked at her distrustfully with his large grey eyes, and who bore a passionate love for his father and received his caresses with transports of joy, was taking away a part of her husband's heart from her, so it seemed to her, and he was the cause of all the friction in their otherwise happy life. She disliked him, and could only with difficulty suppress this feeling, and now, sitting on the bed, sunk in the recollections and memories

of her past life, she did not for a moment reproach herself for her unkindness and injustice towards her step-son. She thought only of her own children, of the terrible poverty which was threatening them. She also thought that fate had dealt very unjustly with her, too.

She recollected how many years before, she, a beautiful young woman surrounded by luxury, the tender care of a loving husband, with a host of admirers, began to preach the idea of equality. She had become passionately attached to this idea, and declared in a tone of firm conviction that the despotic times had passed long ago, when a wife depended on her husband; that now a wife had just as many rights in the family as the husband, and that, so far as she knew, a wife and mother was even of more consequence in the family than the husband.

Anna smiled bitterly.

"Yes," she whispered: "I have retained my independence and equal rights; all the rest is in the grave!"

She, who was only thirty-five years of age and still looking young and beautiful, considered herself, since the death of her husband, an old woman and devoted herself wholly to the bringing up of her children, protecting them as far as possible from want and privation. She had almost entirely forgotten self!

Only the deep sorrow for the man she had loved so dearly, and the eternal fear for the children's future, never left her for a moment. The feeling of loneliness and helplessness grew within her stronger and stronger. She recollected how they used to spend Yuletide in her dear husband's lifetime, the splendid suppers, the crowds of richly-dressed, joyous guests, and her heart contracted with pain. Sighing deeply and brushing away a tear, she rose slowly from the bed.

It was time to set the table. Night was already descending. In the darkened sky, solitary stars were appearing, shedding a soft, silvery light.

"And where is Vania? Again away?" asked Anna, sitting down to the table, around which were already seated Mitia and Sonia dressed in their holiday best, and Milochka, who was still very sad, and whose eyes were red with weeping.

"He is always away!" she added severely, serving the soup to the children.

Seeing that their mother was angry, the children grew quiet and ate their meal in silence.

In the cosy little dining-room the quiet was only broken by the clatter of the spoons in the plates. At last even that noise ceased. Every one was sitting motionless, sunk in his own thoughts. Only

pink-cheeked little Mitia looked around as if he were seeking something. At last he turned to his old nurse, who stood behind his little chair, and asked her in a whisper :

"Niania, have the little angels come already?"

"They have, they have, my sweet. Be good, as I have taught you, because otherwise they might fly away and carry back the nice little Christmas story of the dear Lord!"

At these words Anna made a gesture of impatience and sharply remarked :

"I would ask you, Niania, to tell the children these fairy tales some other time, not when they are at the table."

"But these are not fairy tales, madame! I simply told them to conduct themselves properly or they might not get their Christmas tree."

"It is my affair if they receive one or not. But what have the angels to do with it?"

"How is that?" asked the old woman, greatly offended. "Of course the angels have to do with it. Everybody knows that on Christmas Eve the angels fly among good people and distribute presents."

"Mother, mother, Vania has come!" joyfully cried Sonia, who had seen her elder brother pass through the corridor.

"Well, and if he has, then he has! What are you shouting for?" Anna said in an irritated tone. Turning towards her stepson, who had just at that moment crossed the threshold, she sternly asked :

"Where have you been?" and not waiting for his reply, she added : "You ought, at least, to have dressed a little nicer in honour of the holiday. True, we have no guests, but nevertheless it does no harm to make a proper appearance. Just see what you look like!" and she critically pointed to his short coat covered with stains.

The boy reddened.

"I have nothing better to put on. My clothes are all worn out," he replied, looking down into his plate.

"And your lessons? Why, you are earning more than twenty roubles a month."

"But I am giving you almost the whole of it," Vania said in a very low voice, looking reproachfully at his step-mother.

This reply deeply mortified Anna. Without saying another word she turned her whole attention to the children.

"I saw a nice, large picture in Vania's room," Sonia said, suddenly interrupting the painful silence. "It was lying on the floor and Vania drew something on it with coloured pencils; such a large picture!" drawled out the little girl, and pouting her rosy lips she

added : " Vania always locks the door on me and would not let me into his room, but I saw everything."

" What is this I hear, Vania ? You are playing at painting ? I congratulate you ; this is a fine pastime for a pupil of the sixth form at school whose final examinations are close at hand ! " Anna said sarcastically.

Vania did not reply, he only bent his head lower over his plate.

He was already accustomed to the unkind treatment of his step-mother, but he suffered at her stinging words ; the joyful mood in which he had come home vanished at once. His heart contracted painfully as before his eyes rose one after another the sad pictures of his childhood and early youth. Vania, who had never known the caresses of a mother, lived in his father's house like a stranger. His father had loved him dearly, but his work, that of a civil engineer, had left him but little time for his family. Energetic, active, and always taken up with some very responsible work, he did not spoil his children with excessive tenderness, and treated Vania exactly as he did his other children, calmly and collectedly. How Vania's heart used to beat with joy when his father, noticing some injustice done by his step-mother, used to try to comfort and soothe him with gentle words and caresses ! But this did not often happen ; time passed, and from the unsociable, ill-treated child, Vania became a youth who perfectly understood his position in the family. His relations with his step-mother did not improve, though he tried his best not to displease her in anything. Always respectful and polite, he bore her ill-will with a calmness which exasperated her.

But suddenly his father died and the conditions of Vania's life as well as those of the whole family underwent a radical change. The luxurious surroundings, large circle of acquaintances, the merry, free existence, all vanished as if by magic. The father, notwithstanding the enormous sums of money he made yearly from his work, had left the family almost penniless, with only a small pension to fall back upon which hardly sufficed to keep the wolf from the door.

From the large, richly-appointed house the family was forced to move into five little rooms, and here began for them all a life of care and privation. Vania was fully eighteen years of age at that time.

Seeing the sad plight of the family, he secured some work which enabled him to pay for his schooling and for the room he occupied.

At first Anna would not hear of his paying, but afterwards she very unwillingly agreed to accept this help from her unloved step-son.

Vania, who adored his little brother and sisters, was very diligent in his studies and awaited with the greatest impatience the time

when he should enter the technical school. He dreamed of following in the footsteps of his father, choosing the same vocation. His aim in life was to restore the material well-being of the family destroyed by his father's untimely death, and gaining a moral victory over the step-mother who hated him, to make an end of the hostile treatment to which he had been subjected for so many years.

It pained him very much to hear from her lips now the unjust rebuke ; but he did not show how deeply he was hurt and offended, he respectfully kissed his step-mother's hand as usual on rising from the table and went into his room.

Anna looked after Vania's retreating form, and shrugging her shoulders, rose silently from the table.

Milochka sighed deeply and went back to her sofa, while the old nurse whispered something to the children and led them away to the nursery.

An oppressive feeling of sadness took possession of Anna. She paced the room for a long time, evidently not noticing either the servant who cleared the things from the table or Milochka who sat motionless upon the sofa.

Her thoughts had once more strayed to the past, and against her will, pictures of her free, happy life with her husband rose before her.

Good-natured and gay, notwithstanding the enormous amount of work he had to do, he imbued every one around him with the joy of life.

"What striking dissimilarity between the characters of father and son!" thought Anna, picturing to herself the quiet, unsociable Vania. "He must resemble his mother!" and once more the feeling of jealousy which had tortured her so much in the past, awakened in her heart. She sharply turned, intending to go to her room, when she suddenly heard Vania's quick voice:

"Mother, Milochka, please come into my room. I have prepared a little surprise for the children. Please call Sonia and Mitia, and tell them to hurry," and suddenly reddening with confusion, he hastily added: "I have prepared a little Christmas tree for them, and have already lit the candles."

"You? For the children—a Christmas tree?" asked Anna, looking at him with astonishment, as if distrusting her own ears.

He lifted his eyes to her face, and smiling with a guilty smile, he said in a low voice:

"Yes, I have only hidden it from you because I wanted to surprise the little ones."

Anna could only with difficulty force herself to believe that this ungainly, serious youth, indifferent, as it seemed to her, to the family, could have thought of giving them such a surprise.

And Vania ran into the nursery shouting :

" Sonia, Mitia, the good God has sent you a Christmas tree ! Hurry up to my room ! " and again he ran for his step-mother and sister, whom he already found at the door of his room.

Vania's little room was neatly tidied up by himself for the event ; the table and chairs were pushed to the wall, and in the centre of the room, sparkling with light, stood a lovely little tree.

The children looked at it with delight, and clapping their hands, repeated :

" The dear Lord has sent us a Christmas tree ! The good Lord ! "

Milochka, who had entirely forgotten her own personal sorrow, joyously rushed toward her brother and asked him with a voice full of curiosity :

" Vaniusha, you sly, bad boy, how did you manage to buy and prepare everything in time ? "

" I have even something ready for you and mother," he said, visibly confused. " Sonia, this is for you, darling," putting into the little girl's arms a large, beautifully-dressed doll with long, flaxen curls, which filled Sonia with the most tumultuous joy. " And this is for you," he said, giving Mitia a high horse on wheels, which the boy immediately mounted and, throwing upon his sister the glances of a victorious rider, began to whip up his horse.

" Look out, Sonia, do not come too near the horse or it will run you over ! " shouted Vania, pressing close to the wall and making believe that he was afraid of the horse.

Anna looked smilingly at the awkward youth, and involuntarily rested upon him a deeply-touched, tender glance. She gazed at the face of Vania, reddened with joyful excitement, at his eyes that were now sparkling with merriment from under his thick eyelashes, and noted with surprise the striking resemblance of the boy to her dead husband.

" Why have I never before noticed it ? " she reproached herself in thought, and looked with still greater tenderness at the face of the transformed youth.

How unlike his present joyful glance was to that stern, morose look his face generally wore, and to which they were all so accustomed !

A ray of bright spring sun melted the crust of ice which had for so many years covered Anna Nickolaievna's heart, and called up from the depth of her soul a tender, motherly feeling toward the, until now, unloved step-son.

" Mother, this is what I have for you," said Vania, and timidly handed her a small velvet case.

She opened it with growing curiosity and her heart began to throb joyously.

In the case, on a bed of dark-red velvet, lay a long and ardently-desired gold brooch, in which was set a beautifully-executed miniature of her husband.

Anna, for the first time in all the eighteen years, imprinted a loving kiss on the bent head of the youth.

He replied to her caress impetuously, pressing her hand to his lips. Then he hastily walked over to the table and opened a package.

"Ah!" screamed Milochka and rushed to the table. Vania held before her a roll of the finest white muslin.

Milochka could hardly believe her own eyes. The present was too unexpected!

"And here is material also for mother's dress," spoke Vania, untying another package and taking out of it a grey shimmering silk.

"Now you can go with mother to your first ball on New Year's Eve." He smiled a sweet, bright smile, and seeing his sister's face alight with happiness, he added:

"Now you won't cry any more, will you?"

"Vaniusha, darling, dearest!" excitedly exclaimed Milochka, throwing her arms around her brother's neck. "You are such a good, noble boy, and I love you so much, so very much!"

The stuff fell to the floor, but the young girl paid no attention to it, but continued to press her brother closely in her arms and repeat:

"I love you, love you, Vaniusha——"

Anna also approached Vania.

"But you must not forget that I have also something to thank him for, you selfish little thing," she said to her daughter jestingly. "I also want to kiss Vania, and to thank him for the merry Christmas he has given us." And pushing Milochka aside, she tenderly drew the youth to herself and, gazing lovingly into his eyes, she said in a low voice: "Vania, you have given us all this day a great joy. I thank you, my dearest boy, from all my heart."

She called him for the first time in his life "dearest," and spoke to him with a tenderness in her voice with which he had never before been addressed by her. Under the motherly, caressing glance of Anna's large black eyes the youth forgot his solitary, joyless childhood, forgot the bitterness of the many years of unjust treatment. His heart, which had so longed for love and sympathy, responded at once, and he, forgiving and happy, trustfully met his step-mother's gaze, which was now alight with unfeigned love and tenderness.

They stood for a long time closely pressed to each other, and it seemed as if this woman, whose whole life had been so cruelly broken by the untimely death of a passionately-loved husband, looked to this strong, energetic young man for help.

Mitia and Sonia joyfully danced round the Christmas tree, looking

at the many sweets with sparkling, expectant eyes. Milochka gazed smilingly at her present, singing softly to herself, and the old nurse stood on the threshold, and watching with good-natured smiles the exulting children, whispered :

"Thanks be to God, glory to the Creator ! We have a merry Christmas, as it should be !"

"But tell me, tell me frankly," said Anna, a short time after, forcing Vania to sit by her side, "how it came into your head to get a Christmas tree for the children, and where did you get the money for it ?"

"Oh, I thought of it a long time," Vania said with a deep sigh. "In fact, I thought of it during the whole year. Seeing how hard it was for you to make ends meet, and that it was becoming harder and harder with every month, I began to look for something to do aside from my lessons. A friend of my father, the Government architect, gave me some plans to draw——"

"That must have been what Sonia called pictures ?" impetuously asked Anna.

"The same," replied Vania. "I have spent almost whole nights over them during the past three months. I wanted to earn enough money to get the children a tree, so they would not be disappointed. I thought you would also like the children to be happy on this day. Afterwards I could give you all my extra earnings and make it a little easier. To-day," continued the boy hastily, as if fearing that he would not have time to tell all, "to-day, when I saw Milochka's tears I could not stand it any longer, and going over to the architect I borrowed the money for the dresses from him. I shall pay him back afterwards with my work," concluded the boy, reddening with excitement and joy.

"But, Vania, this work is more than your strength will allow," broke out Anna with a sob. "It is too much. I cannot permit you to do it. I——"

"It is nothing—really nothing, mother," he hastily interrupted. "You must not worry on my account. I am very strong and can do a lot of work. I am like papa—I only hope that you and the children will somehow pull through till I graduate, and then we will live as comfortably as we did when papa was alive," he added gaily, and tossed his thick hair. "Is that not so, Milochka ?" and not waiting for a reply, he sprang from his chair and rushed to his youngest sister.

A moment later Sonia, choking with laughter, sat on Vania's shoulders and he ran around the tree with her, making believe that he wanted to catch Mitia, who ran before him, neighing and imitating a horse.

"The picture of his father !" thought Anna Nickolaievna, gazing

at the face of her step-son, which was alight with infinite joy and excitement. And through the noisy merriment which filled the room Vania's confident voice came back to her: "I can do a lot of work. I am like papa!"

A sweet, joyful feeling took possession of her. Of her former anger and dissatisfaction with life, not a vestige remained. The oppressive sadness and the fear for the unknown future of her children vanished like a mist at sunrise.

She saw before her the powerful form of Vania, who boldly followed in the steps of his father; she saw a strong hand stretched out to her, and once more heard the words: "I am strong, I am like papa."

PRINCESS METCHERSKY

A RACE ON THE NEVA

I

It was the morning of Epiphany. The intense cold of the preceding night had moderated, but the thermometer still marked fifteen degrees below zero. The sun shone brilliantly in a sky of cloudless blue ; the air was like a revivifying elixir. All sounds were vibrant, distinct, penetrating, and every object seemed sharply outlined in the transparent light. The bells of the innumerable churches in St. Petersburg were ringing the chimes at full swing.

In a drawing-room where the sunshine, subdued by green shades, filtered through curtains of yellow silk, filling the great apartment with a golden atmosphere, a young woman was walking rapidly to and fro. She was above the average height, but slender and graceful. She wore a long robe of white cashmere whose severe cut brought into sculptural relief the outlines of her superb figure. Her hair of reddish gold rippled in close waves around her temples and forehead, and was gathered in a loose knot at the top of her head. A kind of sweet severity, singularly suggestive of repressed strength, characterised her whole personality. At times she paused in her rapid walk up and down the room, as if thinking deeply, then suddenly resumed her interrupted promenade.

A servant in livery covered with gold braid opened the door and announced : " Captain Répnine."

He had scarcely finished speaking when Alexander Répnine entered, out of breath, exclaiming : " Pardon, my dear Elisaveta, have I kept you waiting ? " And the new arrival, a handsome young man with keen, dark eyes and a silky brown moustache which shaded a smiling mouth, looked at Elisaveta Petrovna, who was taller than he, with an air of anxiety.

She shook her head.

" Ah, so much the better, so much the better, for I had begun to

think that I would never get here in time to escort you to the races. Until the last moment I was detained—interrupted and delayed. I scarcely knew where I was. Oh, but the races are going to be superb, extraordinary. Never in the memory of man has the track been so perfect—so hard and smooth ; not a flake of snow on the ice, which is blue and polished like steel. You know how seldom it is so, with that infernal wind that sends drifts of snow blowing from Lake Ladoga. But during the night more than five hundred men have been working on it steadily ; for the most famous horses in Russia are engaged. The Imperial stud furnishes several, but the most brilliant, the most miraculous of all will be the three-horse race. Never, never were such superb teams. If you saw them you would compare them to nothing but the coursers of Phaeton. I am really becoming lyrical. But you have not changed your dress.”

“Oh, as to that,” replied Elisaveta, “I need only my long fur coat, my toque and my gloves. But there is no need to hurry, dear Alexander. Let us sit down and talk a while. It is only twelve o’clock ; we have just finished breakfast—and you too, I hope. The races begin at one. It is but a ten minutes’ drive from here to the Neva ; we will surely arrive, as you always do, among the first. And besides, I want to ask you something. Some occult influence must have been at work with me, for I don’t know why I should think of it now—do you remember Jean Hotzko ? ”

“How could I forget him ? Didn’t he disappear in a most mysterious manner—though not more mysterious than his personality ? Was there ever a being more absolutely original, and who has left more ineffaceable traces in the memory of all who knew him ? But as for knowing him—who ever really knew him ? ”

“Oh, that most abused word ‘original,’ ” said Veta sadly, as if interrogating her own thoughts. “What has become of this man ? ” she continued, without listening to the jealous exclamations of her betrothed. “Two years ago he appeared in our world, young, of unknown parentage. Fabulously rich, for a whole season he astonished St. Petersburg by his generous and eccentric prodigalities, or, as some called them, his follies. And his manner, at once so gentle and so haughty—sometimes frozen by impenetrable reserve, then exuberant, emotional, in striking contrast to the conventional correctness of those triflers who only tolerated Hotzko because he was rich. What has become of him ? ”

“I do not know, though there were a thousand rumours. He was engaged and compromised in certain political and financial complications, not so much on his own account as to oblige some of his friends, who proved unscrupulous and ungrateful. Hotzko dis-

appeared one day, as you know. His creditors were all paid in full, and he discharged all the immense obligations that had accumulated through his inexperience. His house and all it contained, its numberless objects of art and luxury, were sold. But what distressed him more than all the rest was the sale of his horses. Almost all of his famous racers were bought at shamefully low prices by horse dealers. That is really all I know."

II

The Neva, its broad surface frozen and glittering, becomes for seven long months the passive and powerful slave of man, like a Titan enchained by some magic charm. During that time it is really a broad carriage-way between the two superb quays of rose-coloured granite which enclose it. Between the quays, on the snowy plain of the benumbed Neva, is laid out a broad ribbon of steel blue, forming an ellipse several versts in circumference. This is the race-track, hollowed out and swept clean in the solid ice. Washed with warm water, by dint of unremitting labour, it resembles a mirror of polished steel. More than a hundred thousand spectators surround the arena. Light wooden galleries are built around a third of the enclosure. These are crowded with officers, with rich merchants, with landed proprietors from every zone in Russia, accompanied by their wives. It is a dazzling sea of vivid colours which are somewhat softened by their own variety; the richest silks and velvets are mingled with the glittering uniforms and waving plumes of the officers. In the centre rises a great pavilion, hung with crimson, where are assembled the highest nobility, dignitaries of state and the vassal princes of tributary countries, grand dukes and grand duchesses surrounded by their respective courts.

Innumerable equipages are massed behind the crowd. From this human hive rises and swells an increasing murmur—cries, laughter, oaths, calls to the vendors of kvass, quarrels, songs, the clinking of sabres of the mounted guard, and the echo of hoofs striking the ice; all are confounded in this vast uproar. One by one the light sleighs bring more spectators, and in the weighing stand are placed the horses booked for the races. There are superb animals from princely stables, the noblest mares of the Orloff breed, covered with Persian carpets or priceless cashmeres, waiting their turn to enter the arena. At the head of each is a groom wearing a shirt of white or red silk, with a close-fitting caftan of black velvet. The coachmen, in long coats of fine cloth bordered with castor or zibeline and wearing oddly-shaped hats that resemble mitres, sit motionless like

painted figures of terra-cotta, holding their reins of closely twisted silk.

A rosewood sleigh lined with crimson velvet pauses before the peristyle of the principal gallery already crowded with spectators. The president of the races makes his way through a crowd of officers of the guard, judges of the races and the principal owners of horses. He offers his arm to a beautiful woman wearing a long coat of blue fox fur, with a toque of the same pressed down on her red-gold hair. She descends from the sleigh and advances very calmly. Her tall figure and queenly bearing reveal Elisaveta Petrovna. Répnine follows close behind her. Together they ascend the steps covered with velvet moquette carpet. Then the president, after conducting Elisaveta to her place, bows profoundly and retires. Veta's face, under the toque drawn down to her eyebrows, is serious, full of a sweet impenetrability.

Suddenly a profound silence falls on the crowd. The president hurries to the seat reserved for him and the bell sounds. The gates of the weighing stand are thrown open, and two horses, each harnessed to a tiny sleigh of gilded osier, appear, led by their grooms. They advance, stepping high with proudly arching necks. Their long manes float in the wind, their tails, crimped and waved like a woman's hair, sweep like trains, and are cut squarely across just to clear the ground. At each movement the silky hair undulates and gives to their carefully balanced steps an air of majesty. Their harness, of lightest leather, and almost imperceptible, is caught together with delicate silver chains. A light arch of some precious wood rises above the little heads of the racers. They advance with measured steps, these horses of the Orient, looking from right to left and neighing as if in acknowledgment of the admiration they excite. One is black, a blue-black, without a single white spot, of slight build, with a full, round chest, small, nervous feet, short, straight back—a magnificent scion of the famous trotters reared in the East. The other is a stallion bred in the Imperial stables, a pure Orloff, a dapple grey with a white mane that sparkles like spun glass. His nobly moulded flanks and slender legs indicate that his origin is more Arabian than Flemish—the two strains which Prince Orloff crossed so successfully after his campaign in Turkey. A network of veins runs over his supple body, and from the pointed tips of his little ears to his small, round hoofs, that might be carved in polished agate, he quivers with suppressed eagerness.

By the side of the black horse, inscribed on the programme as "L'Aigle," ambles a little fawn-coloured Cossack runner, slim as a greyhound, with high haunches, slender legs and coarse, bristling mane. His ears are laid back, his eye full of fire; all nerve and muscle, he is a perfect type of ugliness, but one of those animals that

will make two hundred versts in twenty-four hours, without failing on the road ; those animals which, massed together, have created the finest cavalry in the world, the Cossack legions which were a terror even to Napoleon himself ; absolutely incomparable in attack and on forced marches. A young Tartar, about fifteen years old, perched on a high saddle, is mounted on this wild specimen of the savage races of the Ukraine. He pulls with all his might at the reins of untanned leather, which are ornamented with plaques of wrought silver and two enormous turquoise talismans. This wild-looking rider carries a short ivory whip with several thongs, the classic Russian knout. This enables him while galloping near the black horse to excite and encourage him in the race.

There is a sudden stir ; a bell strikes one brief note, and the horses start simultaneously. At first, swaying from side to side, and measuring their strength, they seem only to observe. The spectators can even hear the quick breath that escapes from their nostrils in jets of hot vapour, visible in the icy air. The little Tartar, bent forward to his horse's ears, seems to have every sense fixed on the sleigh of L'Aigle, just half a head in front of him. His wild face, yellow with frenzy, breathes the most intense and unconscious ferocity. The horse under him has the exact motion of a hound following a hare. By his easy, restrained gallop it is clear that he is not putting forth a quarter of his strength.

L'Aigle, without precipitating his pace, moves with a certain precision, throwing his hoofs with such force that each time they cleave the air one expects to see them break. At each stride he insensibly covers a longer space on the track. But the grey Orloff, Lovki, with a perfectly measured trot, as if merely playing with his superb and supple body, gains by degrees on his adversary. Then the betting begins. A confused noise, gradually growing louder, excites the crowd. It is like the roll of approaching thunder.

The Tartar utters a hoarse cry. He lightly touches his horse, which bounds in the air, and L'Aigle, going with the regularity of a machine and a solid power of muscle, reveals to the connoisseurs that the longer the distance, the more favourable are his chances of winning the race. Without raising his head, his sombre eye shaded by his long forelock, he appears perfectly sure of his strength and endurance. In a few minutes he reaches the Orloff, and they run side by side. Then suddenly he rears his ebony head, passes the grey stallion with a bound, and is some paces ahead.

Cries rend the air : " L'Aigle—L'Aigle gains ! One hundred—two hundred—three hundred roubles on L'Aigle ! " But the coachman of the grey horse shakes his reins, gives a sharp click of his tongue, and is off like an arrow shot from a bow, and Lovki rears his head like an angry swan. His hoofs scarcely touch the ice ; he

swims, he seems to fly, to float ; he reaches his rival, and after some seconds of palpitating struggle, passes him and is in front. The little Tartar becomes not only yellow, but green with rage. He utters cries that are unlike anything human—inarticulate interjections like the bay of a jackal. Nevertheless, L'Aigle, always impassive, pursues his rhythmic course, and follows close behind his rival. Suddenly, at the last minute, only two hundred metres from the end, as if the consciousness of his peril had just struck him, he breaks into a full trot. There is something miraculous in this sudden and unexpected increase of velocity in an animal so calm and imperturbable. At ten metres from the end they are running neck to neck. At five metres L'Aigle is a length in advance. The Tartar is howling like an orchestra of demons. But in the end Lovki wins by a half-length.

The tumult that ensues is indescribable. The entire crowd to a man rush to the track, and surround the conqueror. They kiss his forehead, his eyes, his hoofs ; they embrace the coachman, who remains impassive during the interminable hurrahs. Finally his groom, with a Persian carpet under his arm, arrives to clear the way for Lovki ; and covered with this magnificent housing, which sweeps the ground, and in which he resembles a palfrey of the Middle Ages, draped in gorgeous stuffs, Lovki is slowly led away amid the general delirium.

During the race, insensible to all the clamour around her, Veta had remained in her seat, her elbows resting on the railing in front of her. She clasped her lorgnette with both hands, and followed the movements of the horses without giving a sign of the passionate interest that she felt. Only at the moment when, in spite of the vociferations of the Tartar, the Orloff had affirmed his superiority, she rose in her seat. Her beautiful, frigid mask never softened. Her closely compressed lips restrained the cry of triumph which filled her breast while she seconded with all her heart the victorious efforts of her favourite. But when all was over, she resumed her seat and said very calmly to Répnine :

"I knew it all the time—the noblest blood is always sure of victory."

Several other races succeeded. Then came the turn of the horses driven in pairs, and the interest increased. One would have thought that each man and each woman pressing around the enclosure felt themselves in some way proprietors of those beautiful animals, champions of the favourite sport of the Slavs.

Finally the programme announced the last and most eagerly expected of the races—that of three horses driven abreast to the Russian vehicle *par excellence*, the troïka. This was really the grand feature of the day. As the bell sounds, three sleighs, each drawn by

three horses, approach and draw up at the starting-post. Every one seated in the galleries rises, and in the profound silence that suddenly prevails can be felt the intense strain of expectation throughout the multitude.

The distance to be covered is twenty versts. Very melodious in the rare and icy air is the tinkling of the innumerable little bells attached to each harness. The first vehicle is drawn by three fine horses of golden chestnut colour, with manes of a lighter shade. Their harness is of fawn-coloured leather, skilfully twisted with strands of emerald-green silk ; their reins are of the same colour.

The second team is composed of three Finnish horses—brown bays, with thick, crinkly hair and long, sweeping manes. Their harness is of black leather with plaques of copper. The third troika follows, drawn by three snow-white stallions. Their coats shine like satin ; silvery reflections seem to play about their silky manes and slender, elegant necks. Their noses only are black as charcoal, with immense, quivering red nostrils. Their eyes, slightly prominent, are soft yet full of fire, with circles of bistre like those of Asiatic women. Their harness of brown leather is wonderfully woven of tiny strips like ribbons caught together by small gold crowns. Their coachman is a youth with a brown face and bright dark eyes, a genuine type of the peasants of Bessarabia. The owner of this equipage, beautiful as some fairy chariot, is no other than the Polish Prince Sangoushko, who is the fortunate possessor of the only pure Arabian horses in Europe. The other two coachmen are tall, bearded men with Calmuck faces and narrow, sparkling eyes.

They stand there, these nine horses, immovable before the Imperial tribune, so marvellously trained that not one steps over the imaginary line which seems drawn by the starter. The minutes are passing ; the signal for departure is not given—the horses seem petrified ! The bell fails to sound the eagerly expected stroke. Veta herself, standing, leans forward, mechanically seizes Répnine's arm, and presses it with all her strength. From the furthest extremity of the track people crowd close to the barriers. The wait endures about fifteen minutes.

So intense is the strain that the spectators seem scarcely able to bear it, when suddenly the gates of the weighing stand open and the most startling and unexpected spectacle is presented to the breathless and bewildered multitude. Three wretched, red sorrel horses appear, with thin flanks and melancholy air, covered with patches of muddy snow, with old, worn-out harness, half rope and half leather, attached to a dilapidated sleigh of birch bark, such as is used by the Laplanders to carry dried fish and frozen meat. The horses advance with hanging heads and dragging feet to take their place by the side of their aristocratic predecessors, who toss their

heads with an air of disdain, and look with scornful eyes on the miserable intruders. A groan of horror and surprise escapes the breasts of the multitude, like a hoarse cry from one monstrous throat. Veta trembles and bites her lip till it bleeds.

The bell sounds three strokes, which resound with thrilling intensity in the midst of the general astonishment. The numerous hoofs beat in unison on the resounding ice ; this is a sound whose echo strikes gratefully on the ears of the crowd, wearied by long waiting. The chestnut horses detach themselves from the group, and suddenly find themselves several paces ahead. The middle horse, called by the picturesque name of "The Kicker," an old racer famous for his past exploits, throws his feet about with the grace of a former star in the Imperial hippodrome. His age not permitting him to run alone, and the competition of the troikas exacting more strength than speed, he steps lightly and disdains the aid of the other two horses, lean and fiery coursers of the Don, who gallop with their noses to the ground, bent in a half-circle. After them come the Finns, straining the reins until they seem in danger of breaking ; already the eye of the wheel horse darts fire, and connoisseurs predict that they will give trouble to their competitors. Quite in the rear come the white stallions, marvels of beauty and breed, incomparably matched, and so perfectly trained that their supple and graceful bodies, their fine heads and silvery manes present the strange aspect of a single heraldic animal, so complete is the harmony of their movements. With their red nostrils quivering, light, elastic in their movements, they bound along like horses quite free from rein or harness.

Finally, following mournfully behind these proud coursers, come the poor emaciated sorrel horses, scarcely raising their feet. The faint tinkle of their little copper bells is inexpressibly melancholy. The thinness of these poor creatures makes them appear deformed ; they seem to be there only as the result of some ridiculous wager. Their coachman is a peasant with his back bowed, dressed in a ragged overcoat. Is he drunk, or mad ? No one can guess ; as he drives around the track, rude jests and bursts of laughter accompany the strange apparition. No one has ever beheld such a spectacle on the aristocratic stretch of the Neva.

In this order the troikas pass before the tribune. Halfway in the second round the little brown bay horses, flinging their feet with such velocity that one can hardly distinguish them from the spokes of the wheels, pass the chestnuts easily enough. In vain the latter struggle and quicken their pace. The Finns are some distance ahead, below the tribune of the starter.

During a greater part of the third round the same distances are maintained, but as they again draw near the starting-post the

Sangoushkos, restrained until now by the cunning little Russian coachman, bound suddenly with spirit, and without perceptible effort overtake the chestnuts, pass the Finns, and leave them irrevocably behind.

The crowd start to their feet, shouting : " The whites are gaining ! Hurrah for the Sangoushkos ! " and the horses, excited by the clamour, as if they quite understood the applause, quicken their pace in a frenzy of ardour. They neigh proudly, as if filled with the fire of combat, and at the end of the third round are still far in advance.

Then comes the last round. During the various exploits of its rivals, the sleigh with the peasant driver, while always behind the others, has lost no ground in spite of the indifferent, fatigued gallop of its horses.

Suddenly the peasant sits erect in his sleigh, pushes back the fur cap from his forehead, gathers up the reins, and utters a shrill, piercing, prolonged whistle. Then a most astonishing metamorphosis fairly stupefies the spectators ! The horses, as if responding to some supernatural voice, raise their heads and gather up their strength. Their bony silhouettes take on lines of actual beauty, which seem the outcome of their moral transformation. Their chests expand, their poor heads, lately hanging and dejected, are proudly flung high, their nostrils quiver, their eyes dart fire, their legs recover the powerful grace of an almost forgotten force, their tails, outspread like standards, lash their meagre flanks ! They are like the steeds of some spectral vision, bent with decrepitude, in whom a sudden regenerating breath is instilled, a heroic reminiscence that re-echoes like the clarion of victory. As an old war-horse with bent knees, deaf and half blind, toiling wearily beneath the weight of some heavy vehicle, suddenly catching the sound of the trumpet from the regiment with whom his early years were passed, pricks up his ears, shakes the harness, beats time with his hoofs, bounds forward, dragging the heavy vehicle, his daily martyrdom, as if he scarcely feels its weight ; thus the sorrels, roused from their stupor by the strident whistle, cleave the air with a prodigious bound for which no one was prepared. The transfigured horses responding to the appeal to their blood, carried forward by some unknown secret power, suddenly awakened, rush on like the wind. Soon they are between the bays and the chestnuts, pass them both, and, keeping up their frenzied gallop, gain on the Sangoushkos. Then by one supreme effort, no longer meagre, wretched, broken, but with all the proud exultation of coming victory, straining their limbs of steel, filling the air with their loud breathing, they reach the white stallions. Side by side the teams run for a few minutes, then like a whirlwind the sorrels leave their competitors behind, and

stand still for an instant beneath the princely tribune, victors by ten lengths.

For one long moment the crowd remains mute with astonishment. It was literally impossible to shout or applaud. They gazed stupefied at those wretched horses who had beaten the noblest blood of the empire and then, still and calm, seemed to have resumed their mournful attitudes and former ugliness, like Cinderella in the fairy tale, when she suddenly found herself in the midst of the dance in her poor grey dress and wooden shoes. Never did a magic charm act more speedily or more completely.

And then suddenly from a hundred thousand throats broke prolonged cheers, saluting the victory of those unknown horses over their princely and aristocratic rivals. The fashionable world and the peasants crowded together around the track. All the occupants of the tribunes rose to their feet. They clapped their hands; the cheers redoubled. It was an apotheosis. Everybody wished to find out the name of the peasant, the pedigree of his horses. But without paying the slightest attention to the clamour or to the ovation that surrounded him, he turned his bridle, drew his fur cap low on his forehead, and as piteously as they had entered the arena, with drooping heads and meagre flanks, the poor sorrels resumed their weary road. The light birch bark sleigh seemed to have become an insupportable burden. Nothing could stay their obstinate and obscure retreat. Soon they disappeared behind the gates of the weighing stand.

Elisaveta Petrovna had risen; with trembling hands she thrust her lorgnette into her muff, and buttoning her long fur coat, she took Répnine's arm, and drew him toward the entrance. "Quick, quick!" she murmured. "I must see him, I must see them!"

Without replying Répnine guided her through the excited group who were discussing the events of the day.

"Quick!" repeated Veta, drawing him to the weighing stand. Her glance was full of disquiet, her lips were trembling with suppressed emotion. At this moment the red sorrels, drawing the victorious sleigh, passed so close to them that Répnine drew her back quickly; but she, disengaging herself from his hold, advanced rapidly in front of the horses.

"How I should love to speak to him—how proud I should be to have those noble horses," she said, in a clear, distinct voice.

The peasant trembled and turned his head in the direction from which the voice came. With a trembling hand he raised his fur cap, and their eyes met—his, dark, melancholy, despairing; hers, imploring and filled with tears. She grew very pale; that was all. Not a word escaped her lips. The muddy sleigh, almost dropping

to pieces, was driven over the frozen snow by the peasant, who had sunk back in his seat in his former attitude, while the poor horses seemed ready to drop on their knees.

III

Some months had passed—the astounding event which excited the curiosity of all St. Petersburg was almost forgotten. No one had ever learned the name of the peasant who with his wretched team had won the most astonishing victory inscribed on the records of the races. Some declared that he was a sorcerer, others said that a mysterious doctor had given his horses a powerful draught, potent enough to galvanise the muscles of the poor animals. But then other things occurred which made people forget this unaccountable victory.

Répnine was married to Elisaveta Petrovna. It was the event of the day. On the afternoon of the ceremony, returning from the church where all the court and the aristocracy had witnessed the marriage of one of the most celebrated beauties of the season, an elegant coupé bearing the initials of the newly wedded pair drove them to the door of their new home. At the threshold Répnine opened the door, sprang out and offered his hand to his bride. She descended in her turn very slowly, and paused a moment to admire the silvery splendour of the boreal twilight. Répnine had dismissed the servants with a gesture.

Suddenly Veta turned as if drawn by some mysterious influence ; then she saw attached to the railing of the park at some distance from the courtyard, a sleigh and three horses. Their forms cast monstrous shadows, giving the equipage a supernatural aspect, and the silence and immobility of these animals added to the spectral impression of their appearance. Veta went swiftly down the marble step and walked rapidly toward the mysterious vision. She approached the sleigh without the slightest hesitation, but a suppressed excitement made her heart beat wildly. She recognised the three victorious horses of the great race on the Neva.

The sleigh was empty, but on the faded, tattered cushion of the seat was pinned a slip of paper. She opened it and read : “ Jean Hotzko to Elisaveta Petrovna Répnine.”

Veta trembled ; with an involuntary movement she pressed her lips to the scrap of paper, then let it fall with a frightened air. She approached the horses, which, at the sound of her sweet, caressing voice, whinnied softly. She caressed the noble heads that hunger and privation had blighted, but which still preserved their perfect form, and she recognised the famous racers that had been Hotzko's

pride in the days of his prosperity. Then she passed a trembling hand over their beautiful eyes, and gently detaching the cord that bound them to the railing, she led them herself to the stables, where she installed them with all possible care in the safe, warm, luxurious shelter which they were never again to quit.

J. MITROPOLSKY

WATER

It happened in the Russo-Turkish war in Transcaucasia.

After a doubtful battle, in which the chances were often against us, we had finally become masters of the famous Red Mountain, had just taken it for the second time, and were getting ready to clear it from the enemy. Our regiment had been pushed forward to reinforce the exhausted troops, and we found ourselves suddenly in the first line.

It was night when we marched out. A southern sky, luminous with stars, looked down upon the earth. A mystical silence lay over the landscape; far ahead in the dusky twilight could be seen the flickering line of shining dots. We all knew that over there were the camps of the Turks whom at daybreak we were to face in battle.

The soldiers marched on in silence. Noise and smoking were strictly forbidden. Careless clashing of the bayonets brought upon the guilty ones furiously whispered reprimands from their superior officers, or a silent nudging in the back from their comrades.

Our cavalcade wound its way along the serpentine mountain road, and the scraping of the eight thousand marching feet in the sand was like the noise of a rushing brook. After the nervous tension we had gone through we had a vague feeling of depression, which we could not get rid of, much as we struggled against it.

With my rifle on my shoulder and straps fastened securely to avoid all noise, I moved in the throng of men, trying to ease each step, in order to save my strength as much as possible.

Beside me walked a volunteer of the same company. His name was Vassiljev and he seemed almost a boy. I could not see his face very well, but, somehow, I had a vague feeling that it showed traces of terror and exhaustion. Suddenly he put his hand on my arm and said in almost a whisper:

"Do you suppose that we shall have to fight during the night?"

"And what if we do?" said I. "Are you afraid?"

His only answer was a sigh. Around us was a dead silence;

with measured steps and in pensive mood the soldiers marched on.

At last we arrived at the position. The camp fires of the Turks were yet visible. The stillness of death reigned on the side of the enemy. Our battalion halted and we were able to lie down. We seemed to breathe more freely near the enemy than when marching on the road; though the darkness of night rose like an impenetrable wall between ourselves and him, we knew well what that wall hid from our sight. A gentle wind blew from the direction of the Turks, exhaling a misty vapour.

"There is a river over there," whispered Vassiljev, who was lying beside me. "Do you think, Petrov, that it will be hot to-morrow?"

"The sky is brilliant with stars; we shall surely have a hot day."

"If the Turks attack us, it will be hot enough without the sun," murmured Kudinov, my second neighbour. "We have orders to keep this position and to defend this mountain until the Second Brigade comes to join us."

"Why do we not dig trenches?" asked Vassiljev.

"They are digging them where the outposts are," answered Kudinov carelessly; "but you had better go to sleep, for a hard day's work is before you."

However, this kind advice, which had in it something of a father's tenderness, was not followed by Vassiljev. The whole company loved this boy, who, with his head resting on his hands, was gazing pensively toward the distant fires in the enemy's camp.

"Vassiljev, what made you go to war?" I asked.

"Oh, I was a poor student at college. In Greek I always got the worst marks of all. I have an uncle in the army, and the thought came to me that I might as well become a lieutenant, and perhaps rise to something. That is how I came to enlist. And now the war has come! Do you suppose that I was anxious to go to war?"

I did not reply. To look at the delicate, beardless, almost girlish face, which even the sun had not burned, was enough to know that he did not wish to go to war. It was, perhaps, for this reason that all the soldiers were so fond of him.

"However," he continued, as though to excuse himself, "I do not repent of my action, except sometimes when I think of home. We have a large family and my mother did not want me to be a soldier. We live in the country, where living is a joy; there is a fine river and I am so fond of fishing."

"Oh, what a paradise!" said some one with a sigh, evidently stirred by old memories.

Vassiljev and I talked in low tones throughout the long night, until gradually the darkness vanished and a new day was born. The stars went out one by one; the fires of the Turks were

extinguished. From behind the mountain-tops rose in wondrous beauty the glowing ball of the sun. Gradually it rose, as though dipped in blood, and made one think of the glowing Moloch, who is ready to burn to ashes all things alive.

The captain of the company passed along the ranks and said to the soldiers :

"If you have any water left in your flasks, be very careful with it, as there is no water left. All the barrels have been sent away and will not be back before evening."

"But, Nikolai Ivanovich," said Lieutenant Lastochkin, a young subaltern, pointing in the direction of the Turks, "there is water enough—a whole river!"

"We are forbidden to send even a single soldier over there, so as not to provoke the Turks to an attack," replied the captain. "The Second Brigade cannot be here before evening, and until that time we must remain where we are."

"No water!" With lightning speed these words passed down the line.

"How long can one live without water?" said a young light-bearded fellow not far from me. "Without bread one can live on; without water—never!"

"Do not talk foolishly, Blinov," said Kudinov severely. "Is it not said that a soldier should be able to stand cold, hunger, and every want?"

"But thirst is not mentioned, Uncle Kudinov. Hunger, cold, want, yes, but not thirst."

"You stupid!" replied Kudinov in a superior tone. "Can't you understand? 'Every want'—does not that include thirst, also?"

The soldiers laughed and the embarrassed Blinov became silent.

"How can we save water," said another, "when there is none to be saved—when every drop has been used on the road?"

A sadness came over all. "No water!" Would the barrels travel the distance fast enough in a mountainous country to bring relief in time?

Vassiljev's childlike eyes looked at me half in terror, half in surprise.

"How can we get along without water?" he asked; "I should like a drink even now!"

The sun rose higher and higher and began to send out heat. The day promised to be sultry. I believe every one of us felt himself a victim of Moloch, lying on his knees before him, while the funeral pyre was being prepared.

The Turks still kept quiet. Not even isolated horsemen were to be seen on our flank. The Turks were well off. They had water.

With the whole river before them, they could—such is Oriental cunning—well afford to wait and see what the scorching sun would accomplish without their help. The stone hills, behind which we were hiding, were like a burning oven.

Thus hours passed; the heat became intense; no breath of air was visible. The dry lips, trying to drink in the least breath of air, felt only the oppressive sultriness. Everywhere was heard the word “water,” nothing but water; all else had lost interest. And the sun was burning, burning with such an intensity that one could not put his hand on a rifle-barrel.

“Oh, what a beautiful river we have!” said Vassiljev in his fancies. “Such a bright, clear, deep river! The water flows along its banks on beautifully coloured stones like pearls, or like silver with shining brilliants. And there rises a bubble, a large, transparent bubble, and swims with the stream, until it bursts on the sharp stones. Small fishes are swimming around, and if you stretch out your hand, they fly away like arrows in all directions. And if you want to drink, you bend your knees and take the water in the hollow of your hand——”

“Stop, you devil of a fellow!” cried out some one furiously. “Here we are dying of thirst and he sings of water!”

Vassiljev started in confusion and became silent.

The sun’s scorching rays became more fierce and more pitiless.

“Brothers, the barrels will surely be here soon,” said the captain in an encouraging tone. If the barrels had been filled with gold we could not have waited for them with more impatience. It was to be real water. Can there be anything better in this world than water?

Water!—Water!

And over there in the Turks’ camp everything was quiet. Only faintly we heard the neighing of the horses. Surely the Turks are taking them to the horse-pond. They were watering the horses, while we had not a drop to moisten our throats.

Water!

“What is the use of lying here?” said Kudinov gloomily. “If they would only let us go against the Turks, then we should have water! Hurrah! How bravely we would fight! No need of reinforcement then!”

I looked upon the soldiers. Some were sitting, others were lying down; with their heads resting on their arms, they gazed, motionless, towards the enemy’s camp. Their dim eyes had a vacant look.

The murderous sun soon reached the zenith. Rising higher and higher his scorching rays were bent on destruction. And we thirsted for water like fish thrown upon a shore.

Two hours passed thus. The sun was still above our heads.

Many soldiers became ill with sunstroke. Their unconscious bodies were carried to a field-hospital and a few drops of water were forced down their throats.

I was lying down, hiding my face from the sun, while an ever-increasing thirst tormented me. I know of no greater torture than thirst. My tongue stuck to my throat, my head began to swim, and the pitiless sun shone on.

Water! At times I seemed to be dreaming, though I was always conscious of the noise around me. I saw water. I heard it ripple, I heard it murmur. I seemed to feel its cooling influence. But as soon as I lifted my head, the illusion vanished, and instead of water I saw only the hot and dusty sand.

Vassiljev was sitting beside me with his hands clasped around his knees. In his dim eyes was a look that startled me.

"Do you feel very badly?" I asked.

"I am going to die soon," he said between his compressed teeth. "I cannot bear it any longer—everything swims before me." And slowly the tears trickled down his cheeks.

Something stirred within my heart, but those tears—how my eyes hung upon them! Why, there was real water, water enough to drink!

Gazing at Vassiljev, I reflected that these tears would probably only half fill the field-flask. Suddenly I saw Vassiljev put his hand to his head and sink slowly to the ground. I understood—it was sunstroke.

"Field-surgeon!" cried some one hoarsely. "Take him to the ambulance!"

"Take him yourself!" replied some angry voices. "It is just the same where he lies—there is no more water, here or there."

Kudinov, who had just come from that place, confirmed their words; there was really no more water.

"A whole company over there is unconscious with sunstroke," he said. "I fear that, unless the barrels come soon, many will perish. This one, too," pointing to Vassiljev, "will die," and his face twitched.

The soldiers fell like flies. Had the Turks thought of an attack then, they would have met with little resistance, but it was likely that they, too, had lost all energy in this scorching sun, in spite of the water.

I was lying beside the unconscious Vassiljev, when some one suddenly grasped me roughly by the shoulder, and a voice yelled into my ears:

"Water! The barrels have come!"

I jumped up—no, I seemed to be lifted, to be carried along on wings—and after a few minutes found myself with a large crowd

at the place whither the barrels had been brought. Kudinov was with me. Only those struck down with heat had remained behind. Among them was Vassiljev.

The throng and confusion round the barrels defied all description. It was in vain that the officers tried to restore order, or threatened with revolvers; thirst was stronger than discipline. Everything became like an entangled ball, and there was a yelling and screaming and gasping, as though every one had gone mad. I had been pushed back from Kudinov and found myself suddenly behind them all, cut off from the life-giving water. I remember that I screamed in despair, that I punched my fists into the backs of those who were pushing me, but they abused me and kicked me with their feet.

At last I saw Kudinov again. He seemed to have risen from the ground. His face was red and perspiring and his hat was gone. With both his hands he pressed the field-flask to his breast. I heard it gurgle. Water! How had he been able to get through the throng with water in his field-flask?

I rushed toward him.

"Kudinov!" I gasped. "Give me a drink! I will give you anything you want!"

"Did you not get some yourself?" he said. "Now it is all gone; the barrels have been emptied."

"I have had nothing!" I answered. "Give me only one mouthful and I will give you anything you like!"

"Well, I do not know," said Kudinov irresolutely. "I have only enough for myself and Vassiljev. It would be too bad to let him die."

Then all self in me was aroused. Vassiljev, I thought, will die anyway, or there will be some one else to give him water. I shall be tormented by thirst and die like Vassiljev. Suddenly there flashed across my mind an idea. I must try cunning, I must convince Kudinov that Vassiljev is dead and thus take possession of his portion.

"Vassiljev," I lied, "is dead. I saw with my own eyes how he stretched himself. He had no more need of water. Would you bring water to the dead? But I am dying with thirst. There, take two roubles for half of the bottle. For God's sake, give it to me, give it to me!"

I imagine that I looked miserable enough to excite compassion, but Kudinov was still wavering. "Well," he said at last, "if he is dead—God have mercy upon his soul! He was a good fellow—but such is a soldier's life— Now give me your bottle and I will pour in a little water, but the roubles you may keep for yourself."

I understood that he wanted my field-flask, because he feared that I would drink all, my portion and his ; and he was right.

After some seconds I eagerly swallowed warm and dirty water that smelled of clay, but never in my life did a drink taste so good. After Kudinov had swallowed a few drops, he patted his flask fondly and said : " This I will keep for emergencies. But how long will you be able to stand it without water ? "

I did not reply. I wanted to drink more water, but yet, the terrible thirst, the torture which had let me forget everything else in the world, was gone. And at this moment I was overcome with shame and grief at my selfish action. I thought of Vassiljev, of his water-fancies—and his swoon.

Near us the excited crowd pushed one another and turned the empty barrels to all sides in the vain hope of finding one drop of water.

" Now let us go to the company," said Kudinov ; " there is no more to be had."

We went.

" Kudinov," I said, turning my face away, " I have lied to you. Vassiljev is not dead. He only fainted."

I had not yet finished, when Kudinov stopped suddenly. Involuntarily I, also, stopped and lifted my head. For one moment our eyes met, then mine fell before the contemptuous glance of Kudinov.

" You scoundrel ! " he said and spat at me. " You are stronger than he ; you could have waited until evening when the dew appears. And he will die now ! Oh, what a shameful act ! And to think that I also have been led to commit this sin ! "

He turned around and, without taking further notice of me, rushed toward Vassiljev. I saw how he ran, saw how he bent over him and moistened his head with the rest of his water, never thinking of himself.

I saw all this, and in a sort of fear I remained at a distance. I could not bear to hear his well-deserved abuse. A feeling of terror came over me—a feeling of such intense anguish as Cain must have felt after murdering his brother.

ALEXEY REMISOV

B. 1877

THE OPERA

It was a cold, dusty morning.

The policeman on duty turned over the leaves of the register with a yawn—he was sleepy and felt bilious.

The telephone buzzed unceasingly. The sergeant standing by it sat down and said :

“Where are the papers about the fire ? . . . reward of medals ? . . . yes, medals. . . . Eh ? ”

The heavily-laden postman came in, and the grey, closely cropped old clerk examined the mail.

“This parcel is not for us,” he mumbled through his nose, “not for us. . . .”

“Your highness,” came a voice from the back entrance, “this is the third month that I’ve been here about it ; show a little human kindness.”

“Are you Snegerov ? ” the sergeant asked as though talking into the telephone. “Then go into the council chamber and wait there ; it will do you no harm to wait a bit.”

Somewhere in the back-yard a barrel-organ was playing.

There was a rumbling and stamping of cart-horses.

The grey clouds slowly moved over the sun, turned golden awhile, and then floated away again, as grey as before.

A pen squeaked.

“Wait a moment ; he’ll soon be here,” the policeman said, showing a petitioner into the inspector’s office.

The church bells rang for late service, and their monotonous sound was depressing.

“It must be a funeral,” Slankin thought ; “otherwise they would have stopped long ago ” ; and removing his gaze from the dirty barred window of his “noble lodgings” to the wall, let it wander over all until it came to the inscription, “Kuskov, Conjuror,” and once more he re-read the scrap of the pink play-bill announcing a touring opera company.

Stretching himself nervously, and at a loss what to do, he yawned like a dog.

The battered, rickety stool groaned and rocked to and fro.

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Slankin brought everything to mind, from the very beginning ; not only yesterday's unfortunate evening that had ended in this ignoble fashion, but the whole of his life from the early years in St. Petersburg to the time he had spent in this miserable hole of a town to which the devil had brought him. Thus he passed the endless period of waiting until the inspector should come and decide whether he was to go on sitting on that wretched stool, in gaol, or to walk freely along the miserable streets.

Everybody knew Slankin ; he had the reputation of being a good teacher, and had the respect of all the mothers, for the children whom he taught went up to the next form without losing time. There were few who did not know his past, but they all looked upon his misfortunes if not with approval yet with a certain amount of pity ; with the same feeling as they would have had if his only overcoat had chanced to get stolen during the bad weather ; it seemed as if he always went about without an overcoat, his soaking trousers clinging to him ; that even in fine weather the rain was sure to get at him.

He was inoffensive—would hurt nobody ; and then this wretched opera had come along, seeming to drop from the very skies. To miss an opera in a town where there was not even a string band was like keeping bees without tasting the honey. Seeking out some friends who were fond of music—and there were many such—Slankin arranged with them to take a box together, which they did, in good time ; they agreed to behave themselves properly, not to join in the singing, not to talk and, most important of all, not to be late. When would such another chance of an opera come along ! But obviously some evil angel must have had a hand in the unfortunate business, for, otherwise, how could one explain those events from which it would have been a blessing to have escaped. An unfortunate incident had happened to Slankin—he had arrived late at the opera—and all that followed, the fact that he was sitting there waiting for the inspector, arose in consequence.

He got to the theatre before the curtain rose, but in the time he took to remove his overcoat and find the box, the opera had begun, and he found the door of the box locked. It was impossible to remain outside, it was not his fault, a pupil had detained him, and his watch was a little slow—it was not his fault. Slankin knocked at the door but got no reply—and there was no reply because he had originally suggested that course.

The opera was in full swing. Gods ! How they sang ! As they sing in no foreign theatre ; a tenor brought out a trill so beautifully

that it seemed there was no one greater in the world and that there was nothing more desirable than to listen to his singing forever, or to be the tenor and sing trills through all eternity.

Slankin caught a few trills that merely irritated him, and losing all patience, and forgetting their agreement, he knocked at the door with all his might, demanding an instantaneous admittance.

It was not his fault—he had come in time—it was not his fault the attendant had been so long taking his overcoat and that, owing to his short sight, it had taken him some time to find the box. For fourteen years he had had to wear glasses; it was five years since he had seen an opera, since the time when he had unwillingly been shoved into that town—he had been long enough in that hole—he demanded that they should open the door—he had a right to demand it.

“Let me in, do you hear? Open the door. It is so mean! Don’t you understand?” he urged with voice, hands, and feet until even from the other side of the theatre could be heard his obstinate and increasingly insistent cries for admission.

Meanwhile the police inspector had arrived, and two gendarmes, holding up their sabres and sniffing the air, set out for the scene of disorder, and finding the cause, in one voice and with the same words both requested Slankin to stop making himself a nuisance. They spoke quietly but determinedly:

“Listen . . . the Chief of Police . . . don’t behave in this disgraceful way. . . .”

Slankin heard nothing, and, frowning, went on thumping at the door. Suddenly there was a stamping of feet and shouting, no doubt the act had finished, then something hit against his chest with a swing. He felt himself thrust in somewhere, and then found himself flying in the air; then some one grabbed his leg and he ceased to fly. The door opened and he was dragged out. He would see to-morrow—the tenor held him—the Chief of Police . . . disorder. . . .

Then the same hand under the guise of applause caught him as a hook catches a fish, threw him up high, whispered something resolutely, and, as in a dream, the carriage jerked forward.

Slankin was taken to the police station and locked up for the night in the “gentry’s quarters.”

He rocked himself on the rickety chair and could hardly notice the flight of time that dragged as slowly as though it did not want to get to the fateful hour when the superintendent should come. “Perhaps he will not come at all! And supposing he doesn’t?” Slankin clutched his knees, closed his eyes, and made a tremendous effort to get back there to St. Petersburg, to those days when he had walked about so proudly, where he had been listened to, and

had listened to operas—operas in which Chaliapin took part. . . .
And he too had a voice. He too could sing. . . .

Suddenly everything grew quiet on the other side of the door and outside ; the church bells had stopped ringing, the clouds were no longer moving, and only the sound of a carriage approaching could be heard. . . .

Slankin rose quickly, and wiping his clammy hands on his trousers, murmured in a hoarse voice :

“ Sir, Mr. Superintendent. . . . ”

And “ Kuskov, the conjurer,” the happy conjurer, slipped from the wall, and the pink play-bill flew out of the window into the street.

The doors were opened and Slankin was released.

There was an opera for you !

NICOLAI TELESHOV

THE DUEL.

It was early morning.

Vladimir Kladunov, a tall, graceful young man, twenty-two years of age, almost boyish in appearance, with a handsome face and thick, fair curls, dressed in the uniform of an officer and in long riding-boots, minus overcoat and cap, stood upon a meadow covered with new-fallen snow, and gazed at another officer, a tall, red-faced, moustached man, who faced him at a distance of thirty paces, and was slowly lifting his hand in which he held a revolver, and aimed it straight at Vladimir.

With his arms crossed over his breast and also holding in one hand a revolver, Kladunov, almost with indifference, awaited the shot of his opponent. His handsome young face, though a little paler than usual, was alight with courage, and wore a scornful smile. His dangerous position, and the merciless determination of his adversary, the strenuous attention of the seconds who silently stood at one side, and the imminence of death, made the moment one of terrible intensity, mysterious, solemn. A question of honour was to be decided. Every one felt the importance of the question ; the less they understood what they were doing, the deeper seemed the solemnity of the moment.

A shot was fired ; a shiver ran through all. Vladimir threw his hands about, bent his knees, and fell. He lay upon the snow, shot through the head, his hands apart, his hair, face, and even the snow around his head covered with blood. The seconds ran toward him and lifted him ; the doctor certified his death, and the question of honour was solved. It only remained to announce the news to the regiment and to inform, as tenderly and carefully as possible, the mother, who was now left alone in the world ; for the boy who had been killed was her only son. Before the duel no one had given her even a thought ; but now they all became very thoughtful. All knew and loved her, and recognised the fact that she must be prepared by degrees for the terrible news. At last Ivan Golubenko

was chosen as most fit to tell the mother, and smooth out matters as much as possible.

Pelageia Petrovna had just risen, and was preparing her morning tea when Ivan Golubenko, gloomy and confused, entered the room.

"Just in time for tea, Ivan Ivanovitch!" amiably exclaimed the old lady, rising to meet her guest. "You have surely called to see Vladimir!"

"No, I—in passing by——" Golubenko stammered, abashed.

"You will have to excuse him, he is still asleep. He walked up and down his room the whole of last night, and I told the servant not to wake him, as it is a festival. But probably you come on urgent business?"

"No, I only stepped in for a moment in passing——"

"If you wish to see him, I will give the order to wake him up."

"No, no, do not trouble yourself!"

But Pelageia Petrovna, believing that he had called to see her son on some business or other, left the room, murmuring to herself.

Golubenko walked excitedly to and fro, wringing his hands, not knowing how to tell her the terrible news. The decisive moment was quickly approaching; but he lost control of himself, was frightened, and cursed the fate that had so mixed him up with the whole business.

"Now! How can a body trust you young people!" good-naturedly exclaimed Pelageia Petrovna to her visitor, entering the room. "Here I have been taking care not to make the least noise with the cups and saucers, and asking you not to wake my boy, and he has long ago departed without leaving a trace! But why do you not take a seat, Ivan Ivanovitch, and have a cup of tea? You have been neglecting us terribly lately!"

She smiled as with a secret joy, and added in a low voice:

"And we have had so much news during that time! Vladimir surely could not keep it secret. He must have told you all about it by now; for he is very straightforward and open-hearted, my Vladimir. I was thinking last night, in my sinful thoughts: 'Well, when my Vladimir paces the room the whole night, that means that he is dreaming of Lenchka!' That is always the case with him: if he paces the room the whole night, he will surely leave to-morrow. Ah, Ivan Ivanovitch, I only ask the Lord to send me this joy in my old age. What more does an old woman need? I have but one desire, one joy; and it seems to me I shall have nothing more to pray for after Vladimir and Lenchka are married. So joyful and happy it would make me! I do not need anything besides Vladimir; there is nothing dearer to me than his happiness."

The old lady became so affected that she had to wipe away the tears which came to her eyes.

"Do you remember?" she continued; "things did not go well in the beginning—either between the two or on account of the money. You young officers are not even allowed to marry without investments. Well, now everything has been arranged: I have obtained the necessary five thousand roubles for Vladimir, and they could go to the altar even to-morrow! Yes, and Lenochka has written such a lovely letter to me. My heart is rejoicing!"

Continuing to speak, Pelageia Petrovna took a letter out of her pocket, which she showed to Golubenko, and then put back again.

"She is such a dear girl! And so good!"

Ivan Golubenko, listening to her talk, sat as if on red-hot coals. He wanted to interrupt her flow of words, to tell her everything was at an end, that her Vladimir was dead, and that in one short hour nothing would remain to her of all her bright hopes; but he listened to her and kept silent. Looking upon her good, gentle face, he felt a convulsive movement in his throat.

"But why are you looking so gloomy to-day?" the old lady at last asked. "Why, your face looks as black as night!"

Ivan wanted to say "Yes! And yours will be the same when I tell you!" but instead of telling her anything, he turned his head away, and began to twirl his moustaches.

Pelageia Petrovna did not notice it, and wholly absorbed in her own thoughts, continued:

"I have a greeting for you. Lenochka writes that I must give Ivan Ivanovitch her kind regards, and ask him to come with Vladimir and pay her a visit. You know yourself how she likes you, Ivan Ivanovitch! No, it seems I cannot keep it to myself. I must show you the letter. Just see for yourself how loving and sweet it is."

And Pelageia Petrovna again fetched the packet of letters from her pocket, took from it a thin sheet, closely written, and unfolded it before Ivan Golubenko, whose face had become still gloomier. He tried to push away the extended note, but Pelageia Petrovna had already begun reading—

"DEAR PELAGEIA PETROVNA—When will the time arrive when I will be able to address you, not thus, but as my dear, sweet mother! I am anxiously awaiting the time, and hope so much that it will soon come that even now I do not want to call you otherwise than mother——"

Pelageia Petrovna lifted her head, and ceasing to read, looked at Golubenko with eyes suffused with tears.

"You see, Ivan Ivanovitch!" she added; but seeing that Golubenko was biting his moustaches, and that his eyes too were moist, she rose, placed a trembling hand up on his hair, and quietly kissed him on the forehead. "Thank you, Ivan Ivanovitch," she whispered, gently moved. "I always thought that you and Vladimir were more like brothers than like ordinary friends. Forgive me. I am so very happy, God be thanked!"

Tears streamed down her cheeks, and Ivan Golubenko was so disturbed and confused that he could only catch in his own her cold, bony hand and cover it with kisses; tears were suffocating him, and he could not utter a word; but in this outburst of motherly love he felt such a terrible reproach to himself that he would have preferred to be lying himself upon the field, shot through the head, than to hear himself praised for his friendship by this woman who would in half an hour find out the whole truth. What would she then think of him? Did not he, the friend, the almost brother, stand quietly by when a revolver was aimed at Vladimir? Did not this brother himself measure the space between the two antagonists and load the revolvers? All this he did himself, did consciously; and now this friend and brother silently sat there without even having the courage to fulfil his duty.

He was afraid. At this moment he despised himself, yet could not prevail upon himself to say even one word. His soul was oppressed by a strange lack of harmony; he felt sick at heart and stifling. And in the meanwhile time flew. He knew it; and the more he knew it the less had he the courage to deprive Pelageia Petrovna of her few last happy moments. What should he say to her? How should he prepare her? Ivan Golubenko lost his head entirely.

He had already had time enough to curse in his thoughts all duels, all quarrels, every kind of heroism, and all kinds of so-called questions of honour, and he at last rose from his seat ready to confess or to run away. Silently and quickly he caught the hand of Pelageia Petrovna, and stooping over it to touch it with his lips, thus hid his face, over which a torrent of tears suddenly streamed down; impetuously, without another thought, he ran out into the corridor, seized his great-coat, and then went out of the house without a word.

Pelageia Petrovna looked after him with astonishment, and thought:

"He also must be in love, poor fellow. Well, that is their young sorrow—before happiness!" . . .

And she soon forgot him, absorbed in her dreams of the happiness which seemed to her so inviolable and entire.



EAST EUROPEAN & OTHERS

POLISH

THE group of stories that follows is a somewhat miscellaneous collection with no greater relativeness than that suggested by geographical origins. And yet it seems a natural order to follow the Russian story-tellers with some specimens of the Polish, the Hungarian, Serbian, and Rumanian, in an eastward progression. As a writer of short stories Henryk Sienkiewicz (1848-1916), the most considerable name in Polish fiction, is excelled by many Russians, although he ranks with the best of them in such great novels as "Quo Vadis" and "With Fire and Sword." Naturalness and sympathy are his most noteworthy attributes both in his long fiction and in his shorter pieces. He shows none of that strange, miasmic mysticism which in so many Russians results in the creation of nothing but "atmosphere." He has something of a story to tell and he tells it clearly, his little reflective touches and revelations of character being all so much of a piece with his narrative that they produce their effect on the reader almost unnoticed. "The Lighthouse-keeper of Aspinwall" is as good an example as one could wish of Sienkiewicz' manner, while "Janko the Musician" is more native to his long-suffering country and typical of numerous stories of Central and East European countries, such as Poland, Serbia, and Croatia, which have lived long under a foreign yoke. The story-writer is here a publicist, a fighter for the down-trodden, just as Tolstoi was a pamphleteer in so much of his imaginative work. For pure tragic realism there is a certain largeness of conception which makes "A Night's Tragedy," by Marya Rodziewicz, a very memorable tale, quite worthy to stand as representative of Poland with the two specimens of her more celebrated contemporary.

HUNGARIAN

To most English readers, modern Hungarian literature is represented by one name only—Maurus Jokai. It is certainly not very fertile in the short story, but our researches have produced at least one acceptable tale from an author who wrote in the early years of last century, and if "The Willi-Dance," by Baron Johann Mailaeth, is rather reminiscent of our own Jane Porter and the tearful school of romance, it is still valuable for its folklore interest. But there is a fine confident touch of the born story-teller in "The Bundle of Letters" by Maurus Jokai (1825-1904). Here is an author with an arresting story to tell, a little melodramatic perhaps, and by no means original in invention, but still worth the telling and instructive, as showing what a master of narrative can do with comparatively familiar material. Jokai was probably the most prolific writer not only in Hungary but in all the world, and the list of his novels runs into almost incredible figures. His short stories were equally numerous and somewhat inclined to unnecessary length as the result of his looseness of style. "A Pursuit of Venus," by Árpád von Berczik, introduces us to Hungarian humour, and as nothing is more difficult to convey from one language into another it would not be surprising if there were divided opinions as to the effectiveness of this story, but it can hardly be denied that it has certain laughable qualities, and is told in a lively fashion. Humour of a different kind and more easily internationalised is to be found in "The King's Clothes," by Koloman Mikszath, as this is in no sense racial. Indeed, the germ of the story is much more ancient than the earliest work of Hungarian literature.

SERBIAN—CROATIAN—RUMANIAN

We shall hardly look to the Balkans to furnish forth any considerable contributions to a library of short stories, and yet we are able to include here three representative pieces all characteristic of their countries of origin and each a good example of what a well-told tale should be. "Deadly Enemies," by Svetozar Chorowich, gives us an unexpected glimpse of Turkish character as seen through Serbian eyes; while "Naja," by Xaver Sandor-Gjalski, is a tragic tale of Croatian life written with a political object not very different from that of "Janko the Musician." But "Cosma Racoare," by Michael Sandoveanu, is pure and simple romance with the wild background of Rumania for the play of elemental human passions.

TURKISH AND PERSIAN

Turkey, which has advanced so little in all things throughout the ages, unless we should find a great change resulting from the pro-German journalistic propaganda during the War, has acquired no new literary forms in modern times. "The Princess and the Cobbler" is given as a typical Turkish fiction of modern origin, though it might pass for a minor tale from the "Thousand and One Nights." The same may be said of "Retribution," selected from St. John's "Tales of the Ramad'han," a work which shows that modern Egypt stands in the matter of imaginative fiction pretty much where the Arabs of the Middle Ages stood. There is, of course, a certain affinity between the Persian story-tellers and the Arabian, but a stronger ethical purpose is always disclosed in the former, and this is illustrated very well in the contrast between the two stories just mentioned and "The First Impulse," a translation from modern Persian.

J. A. H.

POLISH

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

1848-1916

THE LIGHTHOUSE-KEEPER OF ASPINWALL

I

ON a time it happened that the lighthouse-keeper in Aspinwall, not far from Panama, disappeared without a trace. Since he disappeared during a storm, it was supposed that the ill-fated man went to the very edge of the small rocky island on which the lighthouse stood, and was swept out by a wave. This supposition seemed the more likely as his boat was not found next day in its rocky niche. The place of the lighthouse-keeper had become vacant. It was necessary to fill this place at the earliest moment possible, since the lighthouse had no small significance for the local movement as well as for vessels going from New York to Panama. Mosquito Bay abounds in sandbars and banks. Among these navigation, even in the daytime, is difficult; but at night, especially with the fogs which are so frequent on those waters warmed by the sun of the tropics, it is nearly impossible. The only guide at that time for the numerous vessels is the lighthouse.

The task of finding a new keeper fell to the United States consul living in Panama, and this task was no small one: first, because it was absolutely necessary to find the man within twelve hours; second, the man must be unusually conscientious,—it was not possible, of course, to take the first comer at random; finally, there was an utter lack of candidates. Life on a tower is uncommonly difficult, and by no means enticing to people of the South, who love idleness and the freedom of a vagrant life. The lighthouse-keeper is almost a prisoner. He cannot leave his rocky island except on Sundays. A boat from Aspinwall brings him provisions and water once a day, and returns immediately; on the whole island, one acre in area, there is no inhabitant. The keeper lives in the lighthouse; he keeps it in order. During the day he gives signals by displaying flags of various colours to indicate changes of the barometer; in

the evening he lights the lantern. This would be no great labour were it not that to reach the lantern at the summit of the tower he must pass over more than four hundred steep and very high steps; sometimes he must make this journey repeatedly during the day. In general, it is the life of a monk, and indeed more than that—the life of a hermit. It was not wonderful, therefore, that Mr. Isaac Falconbridge was in no small anxiety as to where he should find a permanent successor to the recent keeper; and it is easy to understand his joy when a successor announced himself most unexpectedly on that very day. He was a man already old, seventy years or more, but fresh, erect, with the movements and bearing of a soldier. His hair was perfectly white, his face as dark as that of a Creole; but, judging from his blue eyes, he did not belong to a people of the South. His face was somewhat downcast and sad, but honest. At the first glance he pleased Falconbridge. It remained only to examine him. Therefore the following conversation began:

“Where are you from?”

“I am a Pole.”

“Where have you worked up to this time?”

“In one place and another.”

“A lighthouse-keeper should like to stay in one place.”

“I need rest.”

“Have you served? Have you testimonials of honourable government service?”

The old man drew from his bosom a piece of faded silk resembling a strip of an old flag, unwound it, and said:

“Here are the testimonials. I received this cross in 1830. This second one is Spanish from the Carlist War; this third is the French legion; the fourth I received in Hungary. Afterward I fought in the States against the South; there they do not give crosses.”

Falconbridge took the paper and began to read.

“H’m! Skavinski? Is that your name? H’m! Two flags captured in a bayonet attack. You were a gallant soldier.”

“I am able to be a conscientious lighthouse-keeper.”

“It is necessary to ascend the tower a number of times daily. Have you sound legs?”

“I crossed the plains on foot.” (The immense steppes between the East and California are called “the plains.”)

“Do you know sea service?”

“I served three years on a whaler.”

“You have tried various occupations.”

“The only one I have not known is quiet.”

“Why is that?”

The old man shrugged his shoulders. “Such is my fate.”

“Still you seem to me too old for a lighthouse-keeper.”

"Sir," exclaimed the candidate suddenly in a voice of emotion, "I am greatly wearied, knocked about. I have passed through much as you see. This place is one of those which I have wished for most ardently. I am old, I need rest. I need to say to myself, 'Here you will remain; this is your port.' Ah, sir, this depends now on you alone. Another time perhaps such a place will not offer itself. What luck that I was in Panama! I entreat you—as God is dear to me, I am like a ship which if it misses the harbour will be lost. If you wish to make an old man happy—I swear to you that I am honest, but—I have enough of wandering."

The blue eyes of the old man expressed such earnest entreaty that Falconbridge, who had a good, simple heart, was touched.

"Well," said he, "I take you. You are lighthouse-keeper."

The old man's face gleamed with inexpressible joy.

"I thank you."

"Can you go to the tower to-day?"

"I can."

"Then good-bye. Another word—for any failure in service you will be dismissed."

"All right."

That same evening, when the sun had descended on the other side of the isthmus, and a day of sunshine was followed by a night without twilight, the new keeper was in his place evidently, for the lighthouse was casting its bright rays on the water as usual. The night was perfectly calm, silent, genuinely tropical, filled with a transparent haze, forming around the moon a great coloured rainbow with soft, unbroken edges; the sea was moving only because the tide raised it. Skavinski on the balcony seemed from below like a small black point. He tried to collect his thoughts and take in his new position, but his mind was too much under pressure to move with regularity. He felt somewhat as a hunted beast feels when at last it has found refuge from pursuit on some inaccessible rock or in a cave. There had come to him, finally, an hour of quiet; the feeling of safety filled his soul with a certain unspeakable bliss. Now on that rock he can simply laugh at his previous wanderings, his misfortunes and failures. He was in truth like a ship whose masts, ropes, and sails had been broken and rent by a tempest, and cast from the clouds to the bottom of the sea—a ship on which the tempest had hurled waves and spat foam, but which still wound its way to the harbour. The pictures of that storm passed quickly through his mind as he compared it with the calm future now beginning. A part of his wonderful adventures he had related to Falconbridge; he had not mentioned, however, thousands of other incidents. It had been his misfortune that as often as he pitched his tent and fixed his fireplace to settle down permanently, some wind tore out the stakes of his

tent, whirled away the fire, and bore him on toward destruction. Looking now from the balcony of the tower at the illuminated waves, he remembered everything through which he had passed. He had campaigned in the four parts of the world, and in wandering had tried almost every occupation. Labour-loving and honest, more than once had he earned money, and had always lost it in spite of every prevision and the utmost caution. He had been a gold-miner in Australia, a diamond-digger in Africa, a rifleman in public service in the East Indies. He established a ranch in California,—the drought ruined him; he tried trading with wild tribes in the interior of Brazil,—his raft was wrecked on the Amazon; he himself alone, weaponless, and nearly naked, wandered in the forest for many weeks living on wild fruits, exposed every moment to death from the jaws of wild beasts. He established a forge in Helena, Arkansas, and that was burned in a great fire which consumed the whole town. Next he fell into the hands of Indians in the Rocky Mountains, and only through a miracle was he saved by Canadian trappers. Then he served as a sailor on a vessel running between Bahia and Bordeaux, and as harpooner on a whaling-ship; both vessels were wrecked. He had a cigar factory in Havana, and was robbed by his partner while he himself was lying sick with the vomito. At last he came to Aspinwall, and there was to be the end of his failures—for what could reach him on that rocky island? Neither water nor fire nor men. But from men Skavinski had not suffered much; he had met good men oftener than bad ones.

But it seemed to him that all the four elements were persecuting him. Those who knew him said he had no luck, and with that they explained everything. He himself became somewhat of a mono-maniac. He believed that some mighty and vengeful hand was pursuing him everywhere, on all lands and waters. He did not like, however, to speak of this; only at times, when some one asked him whose hand that could be, he pointed mysteriously to the Polar Star, and said, "It comes from that place." In reality his failures were so continuous that they were wonderful, and might easily drive a nail into the head, especially of the man who had experienced them. But Skavinski had the patience of an Indian, and that great calm power of resistance which comes from truth of heart. In his time he had received in Hungary a number of bayonet-thrusts because he would not grasp at a stirrup which was shown as means of salvation to him, and cry for quarter. In like manner he did not bend to misfortune. He crept up against the mountain as industriously as an ant. Pushed down a hundred times, he began his journey calmly for the hundred and first time. He was in his way a most peculiar original. This old soldier, tempered, God knows in how many fires, hardened in suffering,

hammered and forged, had the heart of a child. In the time of the epidemic in Cuba, the vomito attacked him because he had given to the sick all his quinine, of which he had a considerable supply, and left not a grain to himself.

There had been in him also this wonderful quality—that after so many disappointments he was ever full of confidence, and did not lose hope that all would be well yet. In winter he grew lively, and predicted great events. He waited for these events with impatience, and lived with the thought of them whole summers. But the winters passed one after another, and Skavinski lived only to this—that they whitened his head. At last he grew old, began to lose energy; his endurance was becoming more and more like resignation, his former calmness was tending toward super-sensitiveness, and that tempered soldier was degenerating into a man ready to shed tears for any cause. Besides this, from time to time he was weighed down by a terrible home-sickness which was roused by any circumstance—the sight of swallows, grey birds like sparrows, snow on the mountains, or melancholy music like that heard in the past. Finally, there was one idea which mastered him—the idea of rest. It mastered the old man thoroughly, and swallowed all other desires and hopes. This ceaseless wanderer could not imagine anything more to be longed for, anything more precious, than a quiet corner in which to rest and wait in silence for the end. Perhaps specially because some whim of fate had so hurried him over all seas and lands that he could hardly catch his breath, did he imagine that the highest human happiness was simply not to wander. It is true that such modest happiness was his due; but he was so accustomed to disappointments that he thought of rest as people in general think of something which is beyond reach. He did not dare to hope for it. Meanwhile, unexpectedly, in the course of twelve hours he had gained a position which was as if chosen for him out of all the world. We are not to wonder, then, that when he lighted his lantern in the evening he became as it were dazed—that he asked himself if that was reality, and he did not dare to answer that it was. But at the same time reality convinced him with incontrovertible proofs; hence hours one after another passed while he was on the balcony. He gazed, and convinced himself. It might seem that he was looking at the sea for the first time in his life. The lens of the lantern cast into the darkness an enormous triangle of light, beyond which the eye of the old man was lost in the black distance completely, in the distance mysterious and awful. But that distance seemed to run toward the light. The long waves following one another rolled out from the darkness, and went bellowing toward the base of the island; and then their foaming backs were visible, shining rose-

coloured in the light of the lantern. The incoming tide swelled more and more, and covered the sandy bars. The mysterious speech of the ocean came with a fulness more powerful and louder, at one time like the thunder of cannon, at another like the roar of great forests, at another like the distant dull sound of the voices of people. At moments it was quiet ; then to the ears of the old man came some great sigh, then a kind of sobbing, and again threatening outbursts. At last the wind bore away the haze, but brought back, broken clouds, which hid the moon. From the west it began to blow more and more ; the waves sprang with rage against the rock of the lighthouse, licking with foam the foundation walls. In the distance a storm was beginning to bellow. On the dark, disturbed expanse certain green lanterns gleamed from the masts of ships. These green points rose high and then sank ; now they swayed to the right, and now to the left. Skavinski descended to his room. The storm began to howl. Outside, people on those ships were struggling with night, with darkness, with waves ; but inside the tower it was calm and still. Even the sounds of the storm hardly came through the thick walls, and only the measured tick-tack of the clock lulled the wearied old man to his slumber.

II

Hours, days, and weeks began to pass. Sailors assert that sometimes when the sea is greatly roused, something from out of the midst of night and darkness calls them by name. If the infinity of the sea may call out thus, perhaps when a man is growing old, calls come to him, too, from another infinity still darker and more mysterious ; and the more he is wearied by life the dearer are those calls to him. But to hear them quiet is needed. Besides old age loves to put itself aside as if with a foreboding of the grave. The lighthouse had become for Skavinski such a half grave. Nothing is more monotonous than life on a beacon-tower. If young people consent to take up this service they leave it after a time. Lighthouse-keepers are generally men not young, gloomy, and confined to themselves. If by chance one of them leaves his lighthouse and goes among men, he walks in the midst of them like a person roused from a deep slumber. On the tower there is a lack of minute impressions which in ordinary life teach men to adapt themselves to everything. All that a lighthouse-keeper comes in contact with is gigantic, and devoid of definitely outlined forms. The sky is one whole, the water another ; and between these two infinities the soul of man is in loneliness. That is a life in which thought is continual meditation, and out of that meditation nothing rouses the keeper, not even his work. Day is like day as two beads in a rosary, unless

changes of weather form the only variety. But Skavinski felt more happiness than ever in life before. He rose with the dawn, took his breakfast, polished the lens, and then sitting on the balcony gazed into the distance of the water ; and his eyes were never sated with the pictures which he saw before him. On the enormous turquoise ground of the ocean were to be seen generally flocks of swollen sails gleaming in the rays of the sun so brightly that the eyes were blinking before the excess of light. Sometimes the ships, favoured by the so-called trade winds, went in an extended line one after another, like a chain of sea-mews or albatrosses. The red casks indicating the channel swayed on the light wave with gentle movement. Among the sails appeared every afternoon gigantic greyish feather-like plumes of smoke. That was a steamer from New York which brought passengers and goods to Aspinwall, drawing behind it a frothy path of foam. On the other side of the balcony Skavinski saw, as if on his palm, Aspinwall and its busy harbour, and in it a forest of masts, boats, and craft ; a little farther, white houses and the towers of the town. From the height of his tower the small houses were like the nests of sea-mews, the boats were like beetles, and the people moved around like small points on the white stone boulevard. From early morning a light eastern breeze brought a confused hum of human life, above which predominated the whistle of steamers. In the afternoon six o'clock came ; the movement in the harbour began to cease ; the mews hid themselves in the rents in the cliffs ; the waves grew feeble and became in some sort lazy ; and then on the land, on the sea, and on the tower came a time of stillness unbroken by anything. The yellow sands from which the waves had fallen back glittered like golden stripes on the width of the waters ; the body of the tower was outlined definitely in blue. Floods of sunbeams were poured from the sky on the water and the sands and the cliff. At that time a certain lassitude full of sweetness seized the old man. He felt that the rest which he was enjoying was excellent ; and when he thought that it would be continuous nothing was lacking to him.

Skavinski was intoxicated with his own happiness ; and since a man adapts himself easily to improved conditions, he gained faith and confidence by degrees ; for he thought that if men built houses for invalids, why should not God gather up at last His own invalids ? Time passed, and confirmed him in this conviction. The old man grew accustomed to his tower, to the lantern, to the rock, to the sand-bars, to solitude. He grew accustomed also to the sea-mews which hatched in the crevices of the rock, and in the evening held meetings on the roof of the lighthouse. Skavinski threw to them generally the remnants of his food ; and soon they grew tame, and afterward, when he fed them, a real storm of white wings encircled

him, and the old man went among the birds like a shepherd among sheep. When the tide ebbed he went to the low sand-banks, on which he collected savoury periwinkles and beautiful pearl shells of the nautilus, which receding waves had left on the sand. In the night by the moonlight and the tower he went to catch fish, which frequented the windings of the cliff in myriads. At last he was in love with his rocks and his treeless little island, grown over only with small thick plants exuding sticky resin. The distant views repaid him for the poverty of the island, however. During afternoon hours, when the air became very clear he could see the whole isthmus covered with the richest vegetation. It seemed to Skavinski at such times that he saw one gigantic garden—bunches of cocoa, and enormous musa, combined as it were in luxurious tufted bouquets, right there behind the houses of Aspinwall. Farther on, between Aspinwall and Panama, was a great forest over which every morning and evening hung a reddish haze of exhalations—a real tropical forest with its feet in stagnant water, interlaced with lianas and filled with the sound of one sea of gigantic orchids, palms, milk-trees, iron-trees, gum-trees.

Through the field-glass the old man could see not only trees and the broad leaves of bananas, but even legions of monkeys and great marabous and flocks of parrots, rising at times like a rainbow cloud over the forest. Skavinski knew such forest well, for after being wrecked on the Amazon he had wandered whole weeks among similar arches and thickets. He had seen how many dangers and deaths lie concealed under those wonderful and smiling exteriors. During the nights which he had spent in them he heard close at hand the sepulchral voices of howling monkeys and the roaring of the jaguars; he saw gigantic serpents coiled like lianas on trees; he knew those slumbering forest lakes full of torpedo-fish and swarming with crocodiles; he knew under what a yoke man lives in those unexplored wildernesses in which are single leaves that exceed a man's size ten times—wildernesses swarming with blood-drinking mosquitoes, tree-leeches, and gigantic poisonous spiders. He had experienced that forest life himself, had witnessed it, had passed through it; therefore it gave him the greater enjoyment to look from his height and gaze on those *matos*, admire their beauty, and be guarded from their treacherousness. His tower preserved him from every evil. He left it only for a few hours on Sunday. He put on then his blue keeper's coat with silver buttons, and hung his crosses on his breast. His milk-white head was raised with a certain pride when he heard at the door, while entering the church, the Creoles say among themselves, "We have an honourable lighthouse-keeper and not a heretic, though he is a Yankee." But he returned straightway after Mass to his island, and returned happy, for he

had still no faith in the mainland. On Sunday also he read the Spanish newspaper which he bought in the town, or the *New York Herald*, which he borrowed from Falconbridge; and he sought in it European news eagerly. The poor old heart on that lighthouse tower, and in another hemisphere, was beating yet for its birthplace. At times, too, when the boat brought his daily supplies and water to the island, he went down from the tower to talk with Johnson, the guard. But after a while he seemed to grow shy. He ceased to go to the town to read the papers and to go down to talk politics with Johnson. Whole weeks passed in this way, so that no one saw him and he saw no one. The only signs that the old man was living were the disappearance of the provisions left on shore, and the light of the lantern kindled every evening with the same regularity with which the sun rose in the morning from the waters of those regions. Evidently, the old man had become indifferent to the world. Home-sickness was not the cause, but just this—that even home-sickness had passed into resignation. The whole world began now and ended for Skavinski on his island. He had grown accustomed to the thought that he would not leave the tower till his death, and he simply forgot that there was anything else besides it. Moreover, he had become a mystic; his mild blue eyes began to stare like the eyes of a child, and were as if fixed on something at a distance. In presence of a surrounding uncommonly simple and great, the old man was losing the feeling of personality; he was ceasing to exist as an individual, was becoming merged more and more in that which enclosed him. He did not understand anything beyond his environment; he felt only unconsciously. At last it seems to him that the heavens, the water, his rock, the tower, the golden sand-banks, and the swollen sails, the sea-mews, the ebb and flow of the tide—all form a mighty unity, one enormous mysterious soul; that he is sinking in that mystery, and feels that soul which lives and lulls itself. He sinks and is rocked, forgets himself; and in that narrowing of his own individual existence, in that half-waking, half-sleeping, he has discovered a rest so great that it nearly resembles half-death.

III

But the awakening came.

On a certain day, when the boat brought water and a supply of provisions, Skavinski came down an hour later from the tower, and saw that besides the usual cargo there was an additional package. On the outside of this package were postage stamps of the United States, and the address, "Skavinski, Esq.," written on coarse canvas.

The old man, with aroused curiosity, cut the canvas, and saw books; he took one in his hand, looked at it, and put it back; thereupon his hands began to tremble greatly. He covered his eyes as if he did not believe them; it seemed to him as if he were dreaming. The book was Polish—what did that mean? Who could have sent the book? Clearly, it did not occur to him at the first moment that in the beginning of his lighthouse career he had read in the *Herald*, borrowed from the consul, of the formation of a Polish society in New York, and had sent at once to that society half his month's salary, for which he had, moreover, no use on the tower. The society had sent him the books with thanks. The books came in the natural way; but at the first moment the old man could not seize those thoughts. Polish books in Aspinwall, on his tower, amid his solitude,—that was for him something uncommon, a certain breath from past times, a kind of miracle. Now it seemed to him, as to those sailors in the night, that something was calling him by name with a voice greatly beloved and nearly forgotten. He sat for a while with closed eyes, and was almost certain that, when he opened them, the dream would be gone.

The package, cut open, lay before him, shone upon clearly by the afternoon sun, and on it was an open book. When the old man stretched his hand toward it again, he heard in the stillness the beating of his own heart. He looked; it was poetry. On the outside stood printed in great letters the title, underneath the name of the author. The name was not strange to Skavinski; he saw that it belonged to the great poet,¹ whose productions he had read in 1830 in Paris. Afterward, when campaigning in Algiers and Spain, he had heard from his countrymen of the growing fame of the great seer; but he was so accustomed to the musket at that time that he took no book in hand. In 1849 he went to America, and in the adventurous life which he led he hardly ever met a Pole, and never a Polish book. With the greater eagerness, therefore, and with a livelier beating of the heart, did he turn to the title-page. It seemed to him then that on his lonely rock some solemnity is about to take place. Indeed it was a moment of great calm and silence. The clocks of Aspinwall were striking five in the afternoon. Not a cloud darkened the clear sky; only a few sea-mews were sailing through the air. The ocean was as if cradled to sleep. The waves on the shore stammered quietly, spreading softly on the sand. In the distance the white houses of Aspinwall, and the wonderful groups of palm, were smiling. In truth, there was something there solemn, calm, and full of dignity. Suddenly, in the midst of that

¹ Mickiewicz (pronounced Mitskyevich), the greatest poet of Poland.

calm of Nature, was heard the trembling voice of the old man, who read aloud as if to understand himself better :

Thou art like health, O my birth-land Litva !¹
 How much we should prize thee he only can know who has lost thee.
 Thy beauty in perfect adornment this day
 I see and describe, because I am yearning for thee.

His voice failed Skavinski. The letters began to dance before his eyes ; something broke in his breast, and went like a wave from his heart higher and higher, choking his voice and pressing his throat. A moment more he controlled himself, and read further :

O Holy Lady, who guardest bright Chenstohova,
 Who shinest in Ostrobrama and preservest
 The castle town Novgrodek with its trusty people,
 As thou didst give me back to health in childhood,
 When by my weeping mother placed beneath Thy care
 I raised my lifeless eyelids upward,
 And straightway walked unto Thy holy threshold,
 To thank God for the life restored me,—
 So by a wonder now restore us to the bosom of our birthplace.

The swollen wave broke through the restraint of his will. The old man sobbed, and threw himself on the ground ; his milk-white hair was mingled with the sand of the sea. Forty years had passed since he had seen his country, and God knows how many since he heard his native speech ; and now that speech had come to him itself,—it had sailed to him over the ocean, and found him in solitude on another hemisphere,—it so loved, so dear, so beautiful ! In the sobbing which shook him there was no pain—only a suddenly aroused immense love, in the presence of which other things are as nothing. With that great weeping he had simply implored forgiveness of that beloved one, set aside because he had grown so old, had become so accustomed to his solitary rock, and had so forgotten it that in him even longing had begun to disappear. But now it returned as if by a miracle ; therefore the heart leaped in him.

Moments vanished one after another ; he lay there continually. The mews flew over the lighthouse, crying as if alarmed for their old friend. The hour in which he fed them with the remnants of his food had come ; therefore, some of them flew down from the lighthouse to him ; then more and more came, and began to pick and to shake their wings over his head. The sound of the wings roused him. He had wept his fill, and had now a certain calm and brightness ; but his eyes were as if inspired. He gave unwittingly all his provisions to the birds, which rushed at him with an uproar, and he himself took the book again. The sun had gone already behind the

¹ Lithuania.

gardens and the forest of Panama, and was going slowly beyond the isthmus to the other ocean ; but the Atlantic was full of light yet ; in the open air there was still perfect vision ; therefore, he read further :

Now bear my longing soul to those forest slopes, to those green meadows.

At last the dusk obliterates the letters on the white paper,—the dusk short as a twinkle. The old man rested his head on the rock, and closed his eyes. Then “ She who defends bright Chenstohova ” took his soul, and transported it to “ those fields coloured by various grain.” On the sky were burning yet those long stripes, red and golden, and on those brightnesses he was flying to beloved regions. The pine-woods were sounding in his ears ; the streams of his native place were murmuring. He saw everything as it was ; everything asked him, “ Dost remember ? ” He remembers ! he sees broad fields ; between the fields, woods and villages. It is night now. At this hour his lantern usually illuminates the darkness of the sea ; but now he is in his native village. His old head has dropped on his breast, and he is dreaming. Pictures are passing before his eyes quickly, and a little disorderly. He does not see the house in which he was born, for war had destroyed it ; he does not see his father and mother, for they died when he was a child ; but still the village is as if he had left it yesterday,—the line of cottages with lights in the windows, the mound, the mill, the two ponds opposite each other, and thundering all night with a chorus of frogs. Once he had been on guard in that village all night ; now that past stood before him at once in a series of views. He is an Ulan again, and he stands there on guard ; at a distance is the public-house ; he looks with swimming eyes. There is thundering and singing and shouting amid the silence of the night with voices of fiddles and bass-voles “ U-ha ! U-ha ! ” Then the Ulans knock out fire with their horse-shoes, and it is wearisome for him there on his horse. The hours drag on slowly ; at last the lights are quenched ; now as far as the eye reaches there is mist, and mist impenetrable ; now the fog rises, evidently from the fields, and embraces the whole world with a whitish cloud. You would say, a complete ocean. But that is fields ; soon the landrail will be heard in the darkness, and the bitterns will call from the reeds. The night is calm and cool,—in truth, a Polish night ! In the distance the pine-wood is sounding without wind, like the roll of the sea. Soon dawn will whiten the East. In fact, the cocks are beginning to crow behind the hedges. One answers to another from cottage to cottage ; the storks are screaming somewhere on high. The Ulan feels well and bright. Some one had spoken of a battle to-morrow. Hei ! that will go on, like all the others, with shouting, with fluttering of flaglets.

The young blood is playing like a trumpet, though the night cools it. But it is dawning. Already night is growing pale ; out of the shadows come forests, the thicket, a row of cottages, the mill, the poplars. The well is squeaking like a metal banner on a tower. What a beloved land, beautiful in the rosy gleams of the morning ! Oh, the one land, the one land !

Quiet ! the watchful picket hears that some one is approaching. Of course, they are coming to relieve the guard.

Suddenly some voice is heard above Skavinski—

“ Here, old man ! Get up ! What’s the matter ? ”

The old man opens his eyes, and looks with wonder at the person standing before him. The remnants of the dream-visions struggle in his head with reality. At last the visions pale and vanish. Before him stands Johnson, the harbour guide.

“ What’s this ? ” asked Johnson ; “ are you sick ? ”

“ No.”

“ You didn’t light the lantern. You must leave your place. A vessel from St. Geromo was wrecked on the bar. It is lucky that no one was drowned, or you would go to trial. Get into the boat with me ; you’ll hear the rest at the Consulate.”

The old man grew pale ; in fact he had not lighted the lantern that night.

A few days later, Skavinski was seen on the deck of a steamer, which was going from Aspinwall to New York. The poor man had lost his place. There opened before him new roads of wandering ; the wind had torn that leaf away again to whirl it over lands and seas, to sport with it till satisfied. The old man had failed greatly during those few days, and was bent over ; only his eyes were gleaming. On his new road of life he held at his breast his book, which from time to time he pressed with his hand as if in fear that that too might go from him.

HENRYK SIENKIEWICZ

JANKO THE MUSICIAN

WEAK and frail came he into the world. The neighbours, assembled round the bedside, shook their heads over mother and child. The blacksmith's wife, the most experienced amongst them, began to comfort the sick woman after her fashion.

"You just lie quiet," she said, "and I will light a blessed candle. It's all up with you, poor dear, you must make your preparations for another world. Some one had better run for the priest to give you the last Sacraments."

"And the youngster must be baptized at once," said another. "I tell you he won't live till the priest comes, and it will be some comfort not to have an unbaptized ghost spooking about."

As she spoke she lit a blessed candle, took the baby, sprinkled it with holy water, till it winked its eyes, and at the same time pronounced the words:

"I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and give thee the name of Jan," adding immediately (with a vague recollection of the form of prayer used for the dying): "And now depart, O Christian Soul! out of this world, and return to the place you came from. Amen."

The Christian soul, however, had not the least intention of departing out of this world. It began, on the contrary, to kick with the legs of the body as hard as ever it could, and to cry, but in a fashion so feeble and whimpering that it sounded to the women like the mewling of a kitten.

The priest was sent for, discharged his sacred office, and retired; but, instead of dying, the mother recovered, and, after a week, went back to work.

The life of the baby hung on a thread; he scarcely seemed to breathe, but, when he was four years of age, the cuckoo cried three times over the cottage roof—a good omen, according to Polish superstition—and after that matters mended so that he somehow attained his tenth year. To be sure, he was always thin and delicate, with a slouching body and hollow cheeks. His hay-coloured hair

fell over his clear prominent eyes, that had a far-away look in them, as if he saw things hidden from others.

In winter the child crouched behind the stove and wept softly from cold, and not infrequently from hunger if "Mammy" had nothing in the cupboard or in the pot. In summer he ran about in a little white blouse, tied round the waist with a handkerchief, and wore an old straw hat on his head. His flaxen hair poked its way through the holes, and his eager glance darted hither and thither like a bird's. His mother, poor creature! who lived from hand to mouth, and lodged under a strange roof like a swallow, loved him, no doubt, after a fashion, yet she gave him many a cuff, and generally called him a "changeling." At eight years of age he began life on his own account, now driving a flock of sheep, now making his way deep into the forest to look for mushrooms when there was nothing to eat at home. He had Providence only to thank that the wolves did not devour him on one of these expeditions. He was not a particularly precocious boy, and, like all village children, had the habit of sticking his finger into his mouth when addressed. The neighbours prophesied that he would not live long, or that, if he did live, he would not be much of a comfort to his mother, for he would never be strong enough for hard work.

One distinguishing characteristic he had. Who can say why the gift was bestowed in so unlikely a quarter? But music he loved, and his love was a passion. He heard music in everything; he listened to every sound, and the bigger he grew the more he thought of melody and of harmony. If he tended the cattle, or went with a playfellow to gather berries in the forest, he would return empty-handed, and lisp, "O mammy, there was such beautiful music! It was playing like this—la, la, la!"

"I'll soon play you a different tune, you good-for-nothing monkey!" his mother would cry angrily, and rap him with the ladle.

The youngster might shriek, and promise not to listen to the music again, but he thought all the more of how beautiful the forest was, and how full of voices that sang and rang. Who or what sang and rang, he could not well have told; the pine-trees, the beeches, the birch-trees, the thrushes, all sang; the whole forest sang, and the echo sang too . . . in the meadows the blades of grass sang; in the garden behind the cottage the sparrows twittered, the cherry-trees rustled and trilled. In the evening he heard all imaginable voices, such as are audible only in the country, and he thought to himself that the whole village resounded with melody. His companions could only wonder at him; they heard none of these beautiful things. When he was set to work to toss out hay he fancied he heard the wind playing through the prongs of his pitchfork. The overseer, who saw him standing idly, his hair thrown

back from his forehead, listening intently to the wind's music on the fork, seized a strap and gave the dreamer a few cuts to bring him to his senses, but it was of no avail. The neighbours, at last, nicknamed him "Janko the Musician."

At night, when the frogs croaked, the corncrakes cried across the meadows, the bitterns boomed in the marsh, and the cocks crowed behind the fences, the child could not sleep, he could but listen with delight, and heaven only knows what harmonies he heard in all these mingled sounds. His mother dared not bring him with her to church, for when the organ murmured or pealed, the eyes of the boy grew dim and moist, or else brightened and gleamed as if the light of another world illumined them.

The watchman, who nightly patrolled the village and counted the stars, or carried on a low-toned conversation with the dogs in order to keep himself awake, more than once saw Janko's little white blouse scudding through the gloom to the alehouse. The child did not enter the tavern, but crouched close to the wall and listened. Within, couples revolved merrily to lively music, and now and then a fellow would cry "Hooray!" One could hear the stamping of feet and the affected voices of the girls. The fiddles murmured softly, the big 'cello's deep notes thundered, the windows streamed with light, every plank in the taproom seemed to creak, to sing, to play, and Janko listened to it all. What would he not have given to have a fiddle that would give forth such sounds, a bit of board that would make such music! Alas! where was *he* to get it; how could he make it? If they would only allow him just to take one in his hand! . . . But no! all he could do was to listen, and so he listened till the voice of the watchman would call to him out of the darkness—

"Off to bed with you, you imp!"

Then the little bare feet would patter away to the cabin, and the voices of the violins would follow him as he ran through the night.

It was a great occasion for him when at harvest time or at a wedding he heard the fiddlers play. At such times he would creep behind the stove, and for days would not speak a single word, looking straight before him with great glowing eyes, like those of a cat at night.

At last he made himself a fiddle out of a shingle, and strung it with horsehair, but it did not sound as beautifully as those in the alehouse; the strings tinkled softly, ever so softly, they hummed like flies or midges. All the same, he played on them from morning until night, though many a kick and cuff he got till he was black and blue. He could not help himself, it was in his nature.

The child grew thinner and thinner; his shock of hair became

thicker, his eyes grew more staring and swam with tears, and his cheeks and chest became hollower. He had never resembled other children, he was more like his own poor little fiddle that one could scarcely hear. Moreover, before harvest-time he was almost starving, living as he did chiefly on raw turnips, and on his longing, his intense longing, to own a violin. Alas! this desire bore evil fruit.

Up at the Castle the footman had a fiddle that he sometimes played in the evening to please his pretty sweetheart and his fellow-servants. Janko often crept amongst the climbing plants to the very door of the servants' hall to hear the music, or, at least, to catch a glimpse of the fiddle. It generally hung on the wall, exactly opposite the door, and the youngster's whole soul was in his eyes as he gazed at it, an unattainable treasure that he was unworthy to possess, though he held it to be the most precious thing on earth. A dumb longing took possession of him to touch it just once with his very own hand—or, at any rate, to see it closer. . . . At the thought the poor little childish heart leaped with delight.

One evening there was no one in the servants' hall. The family had for a long time lived abroad, the house was empty, and the footman, with his sweetheart, was elsewhere. Janko, hidden amongst the creepers, had already been looking for many minutes through the half-open door at the goal of his desires.

The moon, at her full, swam high in the heavens; her beams threw a shaft of light across the room, and fell on the opposite wall. Gradually they moved towards where the violin hung, and streamed full upon it. To the child in the darkness a silvery halo seemed to shine around the instrument, illumining it so brightly that Janko was almost dazzled; the strings, the neck, the sides were plainly visible, the pegs shone like glow-worms, and the bow like a silver wand. . . . How beautiful it was; almost magical! Janko gazed with hungry eyes. Crouching amidst the ivy, his elbows supported on his little bony knees, he gazed open-mouthed and motionless at this one object. Now fear held him fast, next moment an unappeasable longing urged him forward. Was it magic, or was it not? The violin, with its rays of glory, absolutely appeared to draw near to him, to hover over his head.

For a moment the glory darkened, only to shine again more brilliantly. Magic, it really was magic! Meantime, the wind murmured, the trees rustled, the creepers whispered softly, and to the child they seemed to say, "Go on, Janko, there is not a soul there. . . . Go on, Janko."

The night was clear and bright. By the pond in the garden a nightingale began to sing—now softly, now loudly. Her song said, "Go on; have courage; touch it." An honest raven flew softly over the child's head and croaked, "No, Janko; no." The raven

flew away, but the nightingale remained, and the creepers cried more plainly than ever, "There's no one there."

The fiddle still hung in the track of the moonbeams. The little crouching figure crept softly and cautiously nearer, and the nightingale sang, "Go on—on—on—take it."

The white blouse glimmered nearer the doorway. Soon it was no longer hidden by the dark creepers. On the threshold one could hear the quick, panting breath of the delicate child. A moment more and the little white blouse had disappeared, only one tiny bare foot still stood upon the steps. In vain the friendly raven flew by once more, and cawed "No, no,"—Janko had already entered.

The frogs in the pond began suddenly to croak as if something had frightened them, and as suddenly were silent. The nightingale ceased to sing, the climbing plants to whisper. In the interval Janko had edged nearer and nearer to his treasure, but fear seized him. In the shadow of the creepers he felt at home, like a wild creature in a thicket, now he quivered like a wild creature in a snare. His movements were hasty, his breath came short.

The pulsing summer lightning that glanced from east to west illumined the apartment for an instant, and showed poor trembling Janko almost on his hands and knees, his head stretched out, cowering before the violin, but the summer lightning ceased, a cloud passed before the moon, and there was nothing to be seen nor heard.

Then, after a pause, there sounded through the darkness a low wailing note, as if some one had accidentally touched a string, and all at once a rough, sleepy voice broke from a corner of the room, asking angrily—

"Who's there?"

A match cracked against the wall. Then there was a little spurt of flame, and then—great heaven!—then were to be heard curses, blows, the crying of a child, appeals, "Oh, for God's sake!" barking of dogs, people running with lights before the windows, uproar in the whole house.

Two days later poor Janko stood before the magistrates. Should he be prosecuted as a thief? Of course.

The justice and the landlord looked at the culprit as he stood in the dock, his finger in his mouth, with staring, terrified eyes, small, emaciated, dirty, beaten, unable to tell why or wherefore he found himself there, or what they were about to do to him. How, thought the justice, could any one try a wretched little object like that, only ten years of age, and barely able to stand on its legs? Was he to be sent to prison, or what? One must not be too severe with children. Would it not be well if a watchman took him and gave him a few strokes with a cane, so that he might not steal a second time, and so end the matter?

"Just so. A very good idea!"

Stach, the watchman, was called.

"Take him, and give him a caning as a warning."

Stach nodded his stupid bull head, took Janko under his arm like a kitten, and carried him off to the barn.

Either the youngster did not understand what it was all about, or he was too terrified to speak; in either case he uttered not a word, and looked round him like a little frightened bird. How did he know what they wanted with him? It was only when Stach seized him, laid him on the barn floor, and, holding him fast with one hand, turned up his little shirt with the cane, that poor Janko shrieked "Mammy!" and after every blow he cried "Mammy, mammy!" but lower and weaker each time, until after a certain number of strokes the child was silent, and called for his mother no more. . . .

The poor broken fiddle!

You clumsy, wicked Stach! Who ever flogged a child in such a fashion? The poor, tiny fellow was always thin and weakly, and scarcely had breath in his body!

At last the mother came and took the child with her, but she had to carry him home. Next day Janko did not rise. On the third day he breathed out his soul in peace, on the hard bed covered by the horse-cloth. . . .

As he lay dying, the swallows twittered in the cherry-tree that grew before the window, a sunbeam peered through the pane, and flooded with glory the child's rough hair and his bloodless face. The beam seemed like a track for the little fellow's soul to ascend to heaven.

Well for him was it that at least at the hour of death he mounted a broad and sunny path, for thorny would have been his road in life. The wasted chest still heaved softly, and the child seemed still conscious of the echoes of the outer world that entered through the open window. It was evening; the peasant girls returning from hay-making passed by and sang as they went; the brook purled close at hand.

Janko listened for the last time to the musical echoes of the village. Beside him, on the horse-cloth, lay the fiddle he had made from a shingle. Suddenly the dying child's face lit up, and his white lips whispered—

"Mammy!"

"What is it, dearie?" asked the mother, her voice stifled with sobs.

"Mammy, God will give me a real fiddle in heaven."

"Yes, darling, yes," replied the mother. She could speak no more, for from her heart the pent-up sorrow burst suddenly forth.

She only murmured "Jesus, my Jesus!" and laying her head on the table, wept as those weep from whom death robs their dearest treasure.

And so it was. When she raised her head and looked at the child, the eyes of the little musician were open but fixed, the countenance was grave, solemn, and rigid. The sunbeam had disappeared.

"May you rest in peace, little Janko!"

.

Next day the Baron and his family returned from Italy to the Castle. The daughter of the house and her suitor were there amongst the rest.

"What a delightful country Italy is!" remarked the gentleman.

"Yes, and the people! They are a nation of artists! It is a pleasure to note and encourage their talent," answered the young lady.

.

The larches rustled over Janko's grave!

MARYA RODZIEWICZ

A NIGHT'S TRAGEDY

It was very still. The sun had already set, and one by one the stars were coming out. In the fields all labour had ceased, and the fires in the huts burned low. It had been a long May day, and now the travail of the earth broke out in dew, and tired humanity sought rest in song. Only the river flowing through the village was untiring in its onward course. In its depths the fire of the last hut was reflected like a crimson stain, and a song floated forth, breaking the perfect quiet of the night.

Within the hut four people were resting. An elderly peasant, in a semi-reclining position, was smoking his pipe ; his wife was peeling potatoes, while near the window a young peasant accompanied on his violin the song that issued from the lips of a young woman standing by the fire, her hands clasped behind her head. She was bending slightly forward, gazing coquettishly at the young peasant. She was no longer a young girl—a bright-coloured handkerchief covered her hair, shorn, peasant fashion, close to her ears, and she wore the dress of a married woman, devoid of all adornment. She was young and of striking beauty—her eyes were large and dark, her complexion a rich brown, and her tall, lithe form had something of the untamed animal in its graceful movements.

She sang long without changing her position, provoking the young man with her enigmatic smile, with the passion of her glance, and of her full red lips. When the fire burned low the elder woman fed it with dry branches, and in passing laid a caressing hand on the arm of the younger. Finally the young peasant dropped his bow, the singing ceased, and the silence seemed to become ominous, foreboding.

"Sing some more, dear," pleaded the old woman.

"That is the end," answered the other, stretching out lazily.

"But the rest?" laughed the young peasant. "You have not yet sung about the wedding."

"The wedding song?" she answered, shrugging her shoulders contemptuously. "They have already sung that to you as well as

to me." Her brow clouded over—she bowed her head, suddenly grown old.

"Aye, you rogue," the old woman admonished him, with a coarse laugh, "you are in no hurry to return to your wife."

"No danger of her running away," he answered contemptuously. "Sing, Maryuka, sing!"

She laughed a strange, bitter laugh, and, throwing back her head so that the bright-coloured kerchief fell on her shoulders, she commenced the wedding song, which, strangely for a wedding song, was full of pathos. The young peasant chimed in.

At that moment the door of the hut was quickly thrown open, with the customary greeting, "Blessed be the Lord!" The song ceased suddenly; the young woman stared at the newcomer and shrank back, a pallor overspreading her face. The young peasant sprang to his feet and instinctively grasped the oar standing in the corner. A cry of fear escaped the old woman. Only the elder peasant remained impassive, and, nodding his head, answered, "For ever and ever!"

The newcomer entered, closing the door behind him. He was young and strongly built, with a quiet, sad face. He was dressed in the squire's livery—a grey suit with green edgings; a cap with the forester's insignia and high boots completed his attire. Slung over his shoulders were his hunting-bag and gun, which he took off immediately and placed in the corner. Then he turned to the young woman.

"Good evening, Maryuka," he said, forcing his lips to smile.

"Good evening, Jacob," she answered indifferently.

"Good evening to you, old father, and to you, Maciej. Is all well with you?"

"As usual," answered the old man. "And with you, my son?"

"It is the same with me," he answered, shaking his head.

"Perhaps you are hungry?" questioned the old woman.

"No, only tired. I have come a long distance and will rest a while." He wiped the moisture from his forehead. His fatigue was due to some peculiar cause, for he was white and drawn and his lips were blue. He sat down heavily on a bench and drew a long sigh.

"Perhaps you will drink some whisky," laughed Maciej. "You look as if you had seen a ghost."

"There are worse phantoms than ghosts. I do not drink whisky. I forswore it after my marriage."

A troubled silence followed, which the guest was the first to break. "The night is beautiful," he said, looking through the window; "not a rustle, not a sound to be heard, and the warmth goes straight to one's heart. We will have a pleasant journey home."

"You will not remain overnight?" asked the old peasant.

"I am in a hurry to get home—my work awaits me. I shall remain an hour, until the moon rises."

He arose and, crossing to the young woman, sat down beside her, taking her gently by the hand. "You were singing when I entered," he said softly. "Sing to me also."

Gazing out sullenly into the night she passively allowed him to caress her, stiffening under his touch. He raised his pleading eyes to hers and gazed at her intently. Maciej, opposite, regarded him at first uneasily, enviously; then, sure of himself, insolently. He lit his pipe, and, with a jeering laugh, began to sing.

"You sing well, Maciej," interrupted Jacob, drawing away from the young woman as though frozen by her indifference, and, leaning his head on his hands, he seemed to doze, while Maciej, still jeering, sang on.

Suddenly Jacob rose to his feet and, stretching himself, said: "Thank you for your song. Maryuka never wants to sing for me. In my home never a song is heard, so it has been a rare pleasure. My evenings are joyless. The old mother complains—only the cricket chirps in the corner and the trees moan a bass accompaniment."

He laughed mirthlessly, buckled his belt tighter, and, throwing his hair back from his forehead, took his gun in his hand.

"It is time to be on our way. Get ready, Maryuka," he said, filling his pipe.

"Why not remain the night?" again proposed the old woman.

"No, on a night like this it will be easy rowing—the distance is great, the morning's early—we must be on our way."

Maryuka arose mechanically, without outward protest, but there was unyielding obstinacy in her glance. Silently she gathered her things together, her mother helping with trembling hands. Maciej hurriedly said "Good night," and departed. Jacob, gazing into the fire, waited patiently.

"Listen, my son," said the old peasant. "You are a reasonable man—do not punish her severely."

The old woman took his hand. "Jacob, have pity, do not beat her," she pleaded, raising her pale eyes to his.

He glanced around the hut. The young woman stood ready, with her bundle in her hand, regarding him with more curiosity than fear.

"Give me your bundle, I shall carry it," he said briefly. Then, drawing his cap over his eyes, he nodded to the old couple. "Blessed be the Lord."

"For ever and ever! A safe journey," they answered.

"Good health remain with you!" returned Jacob.

The door creaked, and then all became silent again. Without exchanging a word the couple took the small path leading to the river. The woman went first, the man following. The new moon cast her soft light on them, giving their pursuing shadow the semblance of a ghostly escort. They were greeted by all, but hardly had they passed when they were made the butt of jeers and whippers. "Did you see, stupid Jacob has come for his wife again! It will be as useless as the taming of gipsy blood. Ha! ha!"

The young man heard the sneering remarks. He bent his head and flushed with shame. He was being made a laughing-stock, but he uttered never a word.

They crossed the meadow to the river, which was quietly lapping against the little boat drawn up upon the bank. It was full of dry reeds, upon which Maryuka threw herself and prepared as if to sleep. Jacob pushed the boat far out into the river, and, standing at the helm, steered and propelled it rapidly forward with his oar. He crossed immediately to the opposite side of the river, in the shadow of the low bushes, and soon, at the turn of the river, the village was lost to view. They were alone, entirely alone, on that quiet May night. The forester took off his coat and gun. The moon shone full upon him, throwing a silver path upon the river; and along this luminous way he steered the boat, gazing with sad eyes into the distance beyond her. A damp, pungent odour arose from the depths of the water; the snakeweed gleamed like pale stars on the silver blue of the river, and the grey bulrushes looked like small clouds floating upon the glistening surface of the water; a nightingale sang joyfully in the bushes along the bank; the will-o'-the-wisp flashed now here, now there, in the meadows; a white mist arose. But no living soul was anywhere to be seen.

Jacob rowing noiselessly, as though loath to disturb the perfect quiet. Unnoticed, the boat glided on like a phantom, leaving but a momentary trace behind. The young woman lay in the shadow, feigning to sleep. Suddenly the forester spoke, softly and caressingly.

"Maryuka, will you listen to me?" he pleaded.

"Speak," she answered dully, shrugging her shoulders.

"Tell me where I have been to blame?"

"In nothing," she answered crossly. "I hate you."

"So the old mother was right when she said, 'Take a bad dog, pet and feed him—he will learn to love you. Take a wild bird from his nest, care for him—and you will tame him. But with a human being, it is different. Neither love nor care will win his heart. He will bite the hand that caressed him, and forsake it.'"

"She was right ; you ought not to have taken me," the woman answered roughly.

He looked at her wonderingly. "You forget. I did not take you by force. Two years ago we met on the meadows, where the boys lighted bonfires and the girls sang. I jumped the highest over the flames, you sang the best. Where did I wrong you in loving you, Maryuka, and how was I to know that your love for me would last but that night ? For you did love me then ! Beneath the oaks we waited for the dawn, hand in hand, forgetting the whole world in our love. Many loved you—none but I offered you his life, and that was my only fault."

Agitated, he rowed fiercely on, frightening the nightingales into momentary silence, and the boat rocked unevenly.

"I met you near the river," he continued slowly, in smothered tones, "and spoke passionate words of love—'My little dove, my little bird, come to my home, reign as its queen. I shall care for you as my very soul. I shall give my life, so that you shall want for nothing. What do I care that wicked tongues would hurt you and have warned me against you ? I trust you.' You listened to me, leaning on my heart ; you let me kiss your lips until my very soul, my reason belonged to you. When I came to your father to ask for you you received me gladly and cried as one only cries from joy. Oh, those warm, beautiful nights that witnessed my love, my happiness, my longing, and my unrest ! Often have I returned alone on nights when evil spirits were abroad to delude and beguile me, and when the ice floes of the river threatened destruction and death. But my love for you made me bold. I feared neither evil spirits nor death ; you were my life, my strength. And what am I now ? Our happiness lasted but half a year. I stood with you before the altar, and on a night like this I brought you to our home, where naught was lacking. Have you also forgotten that ? Good God, had I killed a man and then loved and fostered his orphans as I did you, I would have recompensed them for the blood of their father and redeemed my soul before God ! But you plucked the heart out of my breast and trod my soul under foot. You deserted me. Then I grovelled on the earth and bit the ground, and every nerve and bone in my body cried out in pain. My God ! A mother does not grieve over the loss of an only child as I when you left me. You wounded me mortally ; still I clung to hope. 'She will regret, she will have pity on me,' I thought, and I went for you in spite of shame, in spite of jeers, and brought you home again. I listened to the soft whisperings of the night, which seemed to say, 'Be patient, be gentle ; win her by kindness.' I induced you to work, hoping that the evil mood would leave you, never touching you, never forcing you, only always calling you

'Maryuka, my little one, my flower.' And yet you forsook me a second time. The old mother said, 'Let her go.' I could not. People advised, 'Beat her.' I would not!"

"You should have beaten me, killed me, put an end to it," the woman cried out brusquely.

Jacob looked at her a moment in horror and indignation. Then he turned away, and after a long silence continued sadly: "Had I been reared among people, I might have known how. But I grew up in the woods, among the animals and birds, where I never saw a male kill his mate. And the night spoke differently. I had pity on you as on one bewitched. I went for you and brought you back a second time, but I was like one dead—without faith or hope. All the heart went out of me. I forgot how to smile, and the world appeared grey and dull to my eyes, as though the earth and heaven were obscured by the mists of autumn, and then I decided to put an end to it. I was certain now that I could not lure you from Maciej, either by threats or persuasion, and I ceased to struggle against my lot. It is my fate, I thought. You prefer him who, from you, returns to his wife; for whom you are only a plaything, who has many like you, another for each day, and who only makes sport of you all, while you love him as I do you. That is what I thought over and over again till it ate into my very soul, until shame and bitterness overcame me and my heart was dead within me. The time has come. There must be an end of it. There is one of us too many on this earth. I thought first to kill myself, but even then you could not marry Maciej. Then I decided to kill him, but thrust the senseless thought away from me. Of you I could not even think. No, never! It was winter then and you were at home with me. I could not forget my love for you. It killed my soul, but I lived on until spring came. Then you commenced to cry secretly; your eyes had a wandering look and you wasted away. My anxiety grew; each day I returned from the forest fearing not to find you, until one evening, when the ice on the river broke, I came back to find you gone. You yourself pronounced your own doom."

"What doom?" she demanded, growing pale and lifting her eyes to his.

He stood in the moonlight, gazing beyond her at the moving waters. The silent windmill loomed up like a phantom—then suddenly he turned to the right into a narrow, dark passage.

"That is not our way!" she cried, springing to her feet.

"Not ours, but yours," he answered. "It will be nearer for you here to your Maciej."

She stirred uneasily and scanned the banks intently, making ready to escape.

Jacob perhaps understood this, for he smiled half contemptuously, half sadly. "Yes, Maryuka, you have evaded the good man who loves you to go to the lover who only amuses himself with you; but you will not evade your punishment. Your sentence will overtake you, never fear." He spoke slowly, quietly, with the certainty of his design. On both sides the banks were steep and swampy—the river black and deep.

By this time the moon had sunk low and the silence became even greater; for, in this wild, deserted spot, even the birds never sang. Here and there fireflies shone like living sparks, and the quiet was broken only by smothered sighs, frightened whispers, hollow groans that seemed to issue now from the depths of the river, now from the distant swamps, and were like murmurs audible to the soul rather than to the senses. Sometimes the night mists formed groups of fantastic figures on the water, which retreated before the boat, hid in dark nooks and, again reappearing, seemed to pursue them like ghosts of the drowned.

A great fear and horror overcame the woman. She felt as if some inexorable evil were hovering over her, whispering and jeering in the silence of the night. Trembling, she closed her eyes and crouched at the bottom of the boat.

Jacob seemed to listen also and to understand. His face grew sterner each moment, and a cold sweat broke out on his forehead. He was still battling with the remnants of his great love. His soul still whispered words of pity, but now the silence and the night murmured evil counsel and he hardened in his determination.

The boat now floated into a wider space that was very dark and bare. No reeds grew here in the depths. Small eddies bubbled, squirming like snakes and throwing up foam. Again he spoke.

"I went for you to-day," he said in muffled tones, "for the last time. You can have your own way now. The river flows through your village. You will return to Maciej's hut, to caress and kiss him. I am going to give you to him now."

He put down his oar and took from his breast a bright-coloured kerchief. The boat swung in the eddies and then stood almost still.

"Jacob," she screamed; "let me live!"

Her voice choked. Jacob overpowered her with one hand; with the other he bound her head and face with the kerchief, securing it tightly round her throat. She struggled vainly in his strong grasp. He lifted her up, wavered a second, and then threw her as a prey to the whirlpools. The water bubbled and gurgled, carrying her off, and, as if gloating over its victim, cast her up again and again, mocking at her last desperate struggles. Her white dress gleamed, then only her hands. Finally she sank from view, and

nothing but the widening circles gave evidence of the tragedy to which only the night had been a silent witness.

Jacob wiped the cold sweat from his forehead, took up his oar, and returned by the same narrow passage. Again a great silence settled over everything. The silver moon cast her slanting rays and the fantastic figures of the mist pursued him, clinging to the boat and surrounding him on all sides. The windmill, with outstretched arms, seemed to bar his way like a fatal signpost; and again the boat floated along the silver pathway of the moon. Relieved of half its weight the boat swept along rapidly in the current, and in the underbrush the nightingales sang more sweetly than ever before the approaching dawn.

Then suddenly the man grovelled at the bottom of the boat, sobbing in abandonment of grief. The current thrust the boat into a little cove beneath the weeping willows, where it was lost in the deep shadows, and while in the east the heavens paled, the man's sobs disturbed the silence of the night, the song of the nightingales, and the gentle breath of sleeping nature.

HUNGARIAN JOHANN MAILAETH

circa 1800

THE WILLI-DANCE

I

THE proud Baron von Loewenstein stood on the battlements of his castle and gazed with sinister look down on the road that ran away towards Trencsin and then along the river Wag into the populous plain. As he saw the fine slender figure of a young man mounted on a fleet horse emerge from the gates of his castle and gallop vigorously away, he gave a coarse loud laugh and, calling one of his henchmen, bade him fetch his daughter Emelka.

Beautiful as a star flashing in a sombre sky she entered her father's apartment. He led her out on to the marble rampart and said :

"Do you see the horseman galloping there? do you recognise him?"

Hiding her apprehension, she answered: "Yes, father! It is your page Gyula."

"You will never see him again," he coldly cried.

She swooned and would have fallen over the low wall had not her father's powerful arm held her. In her chamber he handed her to the care of her women. Meanwhile Gyula rode unsuspectingly on to the goal of his journey, the Templar Hospitium at Poestény. He carried a letter to the prior with instructions to deliver it secretly. He had increasingly endeavoured to gain the Baron's goodwill, and could not but regard his appointment to undertake this secret mission as a proof of his master's confidence in him. Who knows what sweet fancies raced through his mind?—for he loved Emelka and she loved him.

II

At eventide he stopped in a wood near the Convent to await the darkness and then to make his way to the prior. It was one of the loveliest days in May; the glorious purple sunset, the deep blue of

the sky, the nightingale's wondrous songs, the sweet scent of the flowers, all gladdened his heart: he could have pressed the world to his bosom. But the bells pealing in the distance, the stars coming out in the sky, and the increasing quietness in the wood reminded him that it was time to start; he felt the solemn aspect of the universe as slowly he rode away.

Suddenly he came upon the monastery. It stood up silent, serious, and cold. He gave the sign as instructed by the Baron and silently the heavy door swung back upon its hinges. A voice asked, "Official of the Order?"—"No! from Baron von Loewenstein to the Prior."—"Pass in and follow me." They made their way along a narrow high passage and up a staircase, and stopping before a door the servant knocked three times. Quickly but in low tones a voice answered, "I am alone." The servant pointed to the door and disappeared down the staircase; Gyula entered.

In a high and huge carved chair sat the prior motionless. A faint light came from a candle, and as the young man came within the circle of light and the old prior was able to make out his features, he brushed his open hand across his brow as if trying to recall something long forgotten. He broke the seal and read the parchment in silence. The seriousness of his looks became more intensified as he read on, his eyes seemed chained to the paper. "Your name?" the prior whispered. "Gyula Férhegyi."—"And your parents?"—"Geisa Férhegyi and Suse Lorandi, both dead."—"The ring upon your finger?"—"My dying mother's last gift." A soft red flushed the priest's pale face.

"My predecessor left here so suddenly that apparently he forgot to inform the Baron of his departure. This letter concerns him." He motioned Gyula to a chair.

"He writes: 'To death with the bearer, to death; for though he is of low birth he dares to love my daughter. To death, but secretly, that I may never see his face again.'"

"Does love take into account the pride of ancestry?" cried the youth.

"Silence!" commanded the prior. "I have to carry out the orders of my superiors." While Gyula jumped up thunderstruck, the prior continued: "But to you I cannot do the harm that the Baron commands; swear, however, that you will keep silent about what I am going to tell you!" The youth was moved, and thankfully he grasped the old man's hand, who continued:

III

"You must leave here immediately. Here I have a letter for our master in Croatia. Another was to have carried it, but now you must be the bearer. Read it. The master will enroll you in our army. Bear yourself well and trust in God, and if ever you should want, come to me."

"But how have I earned such pity and kindness, sire?"

"You have taken back my heart to times of long ago. I feel drawn towards you, and you shall know what has never before passed my lips. You are indebted for your life to your sweet mother. I loved her with all the ardour of my young heart; I love her still like the guiding star on storm-tossed seas. I saw her—a girl—very often at her father's castle. Alas! your father also met her there and loved her as I did. And who could help loving her? Must I tell you all the tortures of my heart? I could not bear the uncertainty; so I decided to put my fortune to the test. I rode to her father's castle to declare my love. There I met one of your father's men-at-arms, who called to me to make haste and I should be in time for Suse's betrothal. I turned my horse, handed the man as a gift for your mother that ring you wear on your finger, and galloped away. I became a Templar. She had been married for some time, and I had taken my vows, when one day a knight rested in our monastery who spoke much and whom I hardly heeded. Then your mother's name reached my ear and I knew from him that not all the festivities had been able to bring a smile to her face, that everywhere the tale had spread that she loved another and had been forced into that marriage. All this drove me almost frantic, and I joined the Crusaders to seek death in the far East. But see, the hour-glass has run out, time is precious, you must be off."

The youth embraced the old man. The prior rang for the servant and Gyula left with faltering steps. Sorrowfully he turned his horse away from the path to the Loewenstein, his heart filled with misery, and rode out into the new life.

IV

In the castle of Loewenstein silence reigned. Hardly, however, had Emelka recovered from her fainting fit when a messenger from the prior arrived with the news, "The page from Loewenstein was carried away in the river Wag, where he missed the ford on his way home."

Emelka now fell into a serious illness. The Baron became disconsolate, for she was his only child. A learned monk was called in; but though he succeeded in arresting the course of the illness he could not get at its root. Visibly the girl grew thinner and thinner. The Baron followed the chase and often stayed away for days on end, often too he visited a brother noble in Castle Temetvény and seemed to have serious business with him. On those lonely quiet days in the castle Emelka felt happiest; for then her old nurse Gunda would read to her, while she rested on her divan, those legends of the olden times, those tales of the first wanderings of the old Hungarians, tales of the happiness of constant love, of impossible escape from the punishment for perjury, of the ultimate union in another world of lovers separated in life. Particularly fond was she of the legend of the Willi, which the old woman generally told in this way: "Willi, my dear child, is called the girl who dies as a bride. The Willis roam restlessly over the land and dance at the cross-roads. Should a man find them there, they dance him to death. He then becomes the bridegroom of the youngest of them, who thus finds her peace. Such a one is my sister. Ah, I have often seen her in the moonshine." And then she described the heart-rending details of the suffering, the love, and the end of that poor girl.

V

The winter had passed, and spring had come into the land, when one day Emelka's father announced to her that the Lord of Temetvény was to be her bridegroom. She knew the Baron's obstinate will and silently left his presence. Satisfied, the master of Loewenstein gazed over his lands to those of his son-in-law, revelling in the thought that now he would be able to hunt freely over all these wide domains.

But Emelka in her despair prayed to heaven to take her. She grew pale and weaker from day to day and at last died. "Father, I forgive you for sending Gyula away from me," were her last words. The hard-hearted baron seemed to feel his blood freeze in his veins. He had her coffin carried to a cave in the forest and buried there; from that hour he lived there in solitude, and was never known to utter another word.

Soon the news of what had happened at Loewenstein reached the ears of Gyula in Croatia. Immediately he set out on his pilgrimage home, saying, "If the old baron will not let me guard her grave in his company, then he may kill me; in that case I shall at least rest in the same soil with her, my beloved."

It was late at night when he arrived at the forest of Loewenstein.

The glow-worms danced, the wind whispered through the trees, the moon came out ; and as it struck twelve he found himself at the cross-roads in the middle of the Willis. Softly, softly their voices floated in the stillness ; quicker, faster whirled the dancers, their long hair fluttering in the rays of the moon ; then one came up to him and caught hold of his arms ; " Emelka ! " he called out. He looked into her eyes and his glance froze ; she pressed him to her heart and he stood still. As she kissed him, he was dead.

In the morning as the baron descended into the valley he found the body and recognised it as that of his former page. " O Lord, forgive me my sins ! " he said with eyes uplifted to heaven, and carrying the unhappy youth back to his cave he buried him there beside his daughter.

After that the page and his daughter often appeared to him in his dreams, gleaming like the morning star and looking at him forgivingly and consolingly.

MAURUS JOKAI

HUNGARIAN

1825-1904

THE BUNDLE OF LETTERS

ONE of the celebrated medical practitioners of Pesth, Dr. K——, was one morning, at an early hour, obliged to receive a very pressing visitor. The man, who was waiting in the ante-room, sent in word by the footman that all delay would be dangerous to him; he had, therefore, to be received immediately.

The doctor hastily wrapped a dressing-gown about him, and directed the patient to be admitted to him.

He found himself in the presence of a man who was a complete stranger to him, but who appeared to belong to the best society, judging from his manners. On his pale face could be discerned traces of great physical and moral sufferings. He carried his right hand in a sling, and, though he tried to restrain himself, he now and then could not prevent a stifled sigh escaping from his lips.

"You are Dr. K——?" he asked in a low and feeble tone of voice.

"That is my name, sir."

"Living in the country, I have not the honour of knowing you, except by reputation. But I cannot say that I am delighted to make your acquaintance, because my visit to you is not a very agreeable one."

Seeing that the sufferer's legs were hardly able to sustain him, the doctor invited him to be seated.

"I am fatigued. It is a week since I had any sleep. Something is the matter with my right hand; I don't know what it is—whether it is a carbuncle, or cancer. At first the pain was slight, but now it is a continuous horrible burning, increasing from day to day. I could bear it no longer, so threw myself into my carriage and came to you, to beg you to cut out the affected spot, for an hour more of this torture will drive me mad."

The doctor tried to reassure him, by saying that he might be able to cure the pain with dissolvents and ointments, without resorting to the use of the bistoury.

"No, no, sire!" cried the patient; "no plasters or ointments

can give me any relief. I must have the knife. I have come to you to cut out the place which causes me so much suffering."

The doctor asked to see the hand, which the patient held out to him, grinding his teeth, so insufferable appeared to be the pain he was enduring, and with all imaginable precaution he unwound the bandages in which it was enveloped.

"Above all, doctor, I beg of you not to hesitate on account of anything you may see. My disorder is so strange, that you will be surprised; but do not let that weigh with you."

Doctor K—— reassured the stranger. As a doctor in practice he was used to see everything, and there was nothing that could surprise him.

What he saw when the hand was freed from its bandages stupefied him nevertheless. Nothing abnormal was to be seen in it—neither wound nor graze; it was a hand like any other. Bewildered, he let it fall from his own.

A cry of pain escaped from the stranger, who raised the afflicted member with his left hand, showing the doctor that he had not come with the intention of mystifying him, and that he was really suffering.

"Where is the sensitive spot?"

"Here, sir," said the stranger, indicating on the back of his hand a point where two large veins crossed, his whole frame trembling when the doctor lightly touched it with the tip of his finger.

"It is here that the burning pain makes itself felt?"

"Abominably!"

"Do you feel the pressure when I place my finger on it?"

The man made no reply, but his eyes filled with tears, so acute was his suffering.

"It is surprising! I can see nothing at that place."

"Nor can I; yet what I feel there is so terrible that at times I am almost driven to dash my head against the wall."

The doctor examined the spot with a magnifying-glass, then shook his head.

"The skin is full of life; the blood within it circulates regularly; there is neither inflammation nor cancer under it; it is as healthy at that spot as elsewhere."

"Yet I think it is a little redder there."

"Where?"

The stranger took a pencil from his pocket-book and traced on his hand a ring about the size of a sixpenny-piece, and said:

"It is there."

The doctor looked in his face; he was beginning to believe that his patient's mind was unhinged.

"Remain here," he said, "and in a few days I'll cure you."

"I cannot wait. Don't think that I am a madman, a maniac ; it is not in that way you would cure me. The little circle which I have marked with my pencil causes me infernal tortures, and I have come to you to cut it away."

"That I cannot do," said the doctor.

"Why?"

"Because your hand exhibits no pathological disorder. I see at the spot you have indicated nothing more amiss than on my own hand."

"You really seem to think that I have gone out of my senses, or that I have come here to mock you," said the stranger, taking from his pocket-book a bank-note for a thousand florins, and laying it on the table. "Now, sir, you see that I am not playing off any childish jest, and that the service I seek of you is as urgent as it is important. I beg you to remove this part of my hand."

"I repeat, sir, that for all the treasures in the world you cannot make me regard as unsound a member that is perfectly sound, and still less induce me to cut it with my instruments."

"And why not?"

"Because such an act would cast a doubt upon my medical knowledge and compromise my reputation. Everybody would say that you were mad ; that I was dishonest in taking advantage of your condition, or ignorant in not perceiving it."

"Very well. I will only ask a small service of you, then. I am myself capable of making the incision. I shall do it rather clumsily with my left hand ; but that does not matter. Be good enough only to bind up the wound after the operation."

It was with astonishment that the doctor saw that this strange man was speaking seriously. He stripped off his coat, turned up the wristbands of his shirt, and took a bistoury in his left hand.

A second later, and the steel had made a deep incision in the skin.

"Stay!" cried the doctor, who feared that his patient might, through his awkwardness, sever some important organ. "Since you have determined on the operation, let me perform it."

He took the bistoury, and placing in his left hand the right hand of the patient, begged him to turn away his face, the sight of blood being insupportable to many persons.

"Quite needless. On the contrary, it is I who must direct you where to cut."

In fact he watched the operation to the end with the greatest coolness, indicating the limits of the incisions. The open hand did not even quiver in that of the doctor, and when the circular piece was removed, he sighed profoundly, like a man experiencing an enormous relief.

"Nothing burns you now?"

"All has ceased," said the stranger, smiling. "The pain has completely disappeared, as if it had been carried away with the part excised. The little discomfort which the flowing of blood causes me, compared with the other pain, is like a fresh breeze after a blast from the infernal regions. It does me real good to see my blood pouring forth; let it flow, it does me extreme good."

The stranger watched with an expression of delight the blood pouring from the wound, and the doctor was obliged to insist on binding up the hand.

During the bandaging the aspect of his face completely changed. It no longer bore a dolorous expression, but a look full of good humour was turned upon the doctor. No more contraction of the features, no more despair. A taste for life had returned; the brow was once again calmed; the colour found its way back to the cheeks. The entire man exhibited a complete transformation.

As soon as his hand was laid in the sling he warmly wrung the doctor's hand with the one that remained free, and said cordially:

"Accept my sincere thanks. You have positively cured me. The trifling remuneration I offer you is not at all proportioned to the service you have rendered me: for the rest of my life I shall search for the means of repaying my debt to you."

The doctor would not listen to anything of the kind, and refused to accept the thousand florins placed on the table. On his side the stranger refused to take them back, and, observing that the doctor was losing his temper, begged him to make a present of the money to some hospital, and took his departure.

K—— remained for several days at his town house until the wound in his patient's hand should be cicatrised, which it was without the least accident. During this time the doctor was able to satisfy himself that he had to do with a man of extensive knowledge, reflective, and having very positive opinions in regard to the affairs of life. Besides being rich, he occupied an important official position. Since the taking away of his invisible pain, no trace of moral or physical malady was discoverable in him.

The cure completed, the man returned tranquilly to his residence in the country.

About three weeks had passed when, one morning, at an hour as unduly as before, the servant again announced the strange patient.

The stranger, whom K—— hastened to receive, entered the room with his right hand in a sling, his features convulsed and hardly recognisable from suffering. Without waiting to be invited to sit down, he sank into a chair, and, being unable to master the torture he was enduring, groaned, and without uttering a word, held out his hand to the doctor.

"What has happened?" asked K——, stupefied.

"We have not cut deep enough," replied the stranger sadly, and in a fainting voice. "It burns me more cruelly than before. I am worn out by it; my arm is stiffened by it. I did not wish to trouble you a second time, and have borne it, hoping that by degrees the invisible inflammation would either mount to my head or descend to my heart, and put an end to my miserable existence; but it has not done so. The pain never goes beyond the spot, but it is indescribable! Look at my face, and you will be able to imagine what it must be!"

The colour of the man's skin was that of wax, and a cold perspiration beaded his forehead. The doctor unbound the bandaged hand. The point operated on was well healed; a new skin had formed, and nothing extraordinary was to be seen. The sufferer's pulse beat quickly, without feverishness, while yet he trembled in every limb.

"This really smacks of the marvellous!" exclaimed the doctor, more and more astonished. "I have never before seen such a case."

"It is a prodigy, a horrible prodigy, doctor. Do not try to find a cause for it, but deliver me from this torment. Take your knife and cut deeper and wider: only that can relieve me."

The doctor was obliged to give in to the prayers of his patient. He performed the operation once again, cutting into the flesh more deeply; and, once more, he saw in the sufferer's face the expression of astonishing relief, the curiosity at seeing the blood flow from the wound, which he had observed on the first occasion.

When the hand was dressed, the deadly pallor passed from the face, the colour returned to the cheeks; but the patient no more smiled. This time he thanked the doctor sadly.

"I thank you, doctor," he said. "The pain has once more left me. In a few days the wound will heal. Do not be astonished, however, to see me return before a month has passed."

"Oh! my dear sir, drive this idea from your mind."

The doctor mentioned this strange case to several of his colleagues, who each held a different opinion in regard to it, without any of them being able to furnish a plausible explanation of its nature.

As the end of the month approached, K—— awaited with anxiety the reappearance of this enigmatic personage. But the month passed and he did not reappear.

Several weeks more went by. At length the doctor received a letter from the sufferer's residence. It was very closely written, and by the signature he saw that it had been penned by his patient's own hand; from which he concluded that the pain had not returned, for otherwise it would have been very difficult for him to have held a pen.

These are the contents of the letter :

" Dear doctor, I cannot leave either you or medical science in doubt in regard to the mystery of the strange malady which will shortly carry me to the grave.

" I will here tell you the origin of this terrible malady. For the past week it has returned the third time, and I will no longer struggle with it. At this moment I am only able to write by placing upon the sensitive spot a piece of burning tinder in the form of a poultice. While the tinder is burning I do not feel the other pain ; and what distress it causes me is a mere trifle by comparison.

" Six months ago I was still a happy man. I lived on my income without a care. I was on good terms with everybody, and enjoyed all that is of interest to a man of five-and-thirty. I had married a year before—married for love—a young lady, handsome, with a cultivated mind, and a heart as good as any heart could be, who had been a governess in the house of a countess, a neighbour of mine. She was fortuneless, and attached herself to me, not only from gratitude, but still more from real childish affection. Six months passed, during which every day appeared to be happier than the one which had gone before. If, at times, I was obliged to go to Pesth and quit my own land for a day, my wife had not a moment's rest. She would come two leagues on the way to meet me. If I was detained late, she passed a sleepless night waiting for me ; and if by prayers I succeeded in inducing her to go and visit her former mistress, who had not ceased to be extremely fond of her, no power could keep her away from her home for more than half a day ; and by her regrets for my absence, she invariably spoiled the good-humour of others. Her tenderness for me went so far as to make her renounce dancing, so as not to be obliged to give her hand to strangers, and nothing more displeased her than gallantries addressed to her. In a word, I had for my wife an innocent girl, who thought of nothing but me, and who confessed to me her dreams as enormous crimes, if they were not of me.

" I know not what demon one day whispered in my ear : Suppose that all this were dissimulation ? Men are mad enough to seek torments in the midst of the greatest happiness.

" My wife had a work-table, the drawer of which she carefully locked. I had noticed this several times. She never forgot the key, and never left the drawer open.

" That question haunted my mind. What could she be hiding there ? I had become mad. I no longer believed either in the innocence of her face or the purity of her looks, nor in her caresses, nor in her kisses. What if all that were hypocrisy ?

" One morning the countess came anew to invite her to her house, and, after much pressing, succeeded in inducing her to go and spend

the day with her. Our estates were some leagues from each other, and I promised to join my wife in the course of a few hours.

"As soon as the carriage had quitted the courtyard, I collected all the keys in the house and tried them on the lock of the little drawer. One of them opened it. I felt like a man committing his first crime. I was a thief about to surprise the secrets of my poor wife. My hands trembled as I carefully pulled out the drawer, and, one by one, turned over the objects within it, so that no derangement of them might betray the fact of a strange hand having disturbed them. My bosom was oppressed; I was almost stifled. Suddenly—under some lace—I put my hand upon a packet of letters. It was as if a flash of lightning had passed through me from my head to my heart. Oh! they were the sort of letters one recognises at a glance—love letters!

"The packet was tied with a rose-coloured ribbon, edged with silver.

"As I touched that ribbon this thought came into my mind: Is it conceivable?—is this the work of an honest man? To steal the secrets of his wife!—secrets belonging to the time when she was a young girl. Have I any right to exact from her a reckoning for thoughts she may have had before she belonged to me? Have I any right to be jealous of a time when I was unknown to her? Who could suspect her of a fault? Who? I am guilty for having suspected her. The demon again whispered in my ears: 'But what if these letters date from a time when you already had a right to know all her thoughts, when you might already be jealous of her dreams, when she was already yours?' I unfastened the ribbon. Nobody saw me. There was not even a mirror to make me blush for myself. I opened one letter, then another, and I read them to the end.

"Oh, it was a terrible hour for me!

"What was there in these letters? The vilest treason of which a man has ever been the victim. The writer of these letters was one of my intimate friends! And the tone in which they were written!—what passion, what love, certain of being returned! How he spoke of 'keeping the secret'! And all these letters dated at a time when I was married and so happy! How can I tell you what I felt? Imagine the intoxication caused by a mortal poison. I read all those letters—every one. Then I put them up again in a packet, retied them with the ribbon, and, replacing them under the lace, relocked the drawer.

"I knew that if she did not see me by noon she would return in the evening from her visit to the countess—as she did. She descended from the *calèche* hurriedly, to rush towards me as I stood awaiting her on the steps. She kissed me with excessive tenderness,

and appeared extremely happy to be once again with me. I allowed nothing of what was passing within me to appear in my face. We conversed, we supped together, and retired to our bedrooms. I did not close an eye. Broad awake, I counted all the hours. When the clock struck the first quarter after midnight, I rose and entered her room. The beautiful fair head was there pressed into the white pillows—as angels are painted in the midst of snowy clouds. What a frightful lie of nature's is vice under an aspect so innocent! I was resolved, with the headlong wilfulness of a madman, haunted by a fixed idea. The poison had completely corroded my soul. I resolved to kill her as she lay.

"I pass over the details of the crime. She died without offering the least resistance, as tranquilly as one goes to sleep. She was never irritated against me—even when I killed her. One single drop of blood fell on the back of my hand—you know where. I did not perceive it until the next day, when it was dry.

"We buried her without anybody suspecting the truth. I lived in solitude. Who could have controlled my actions? She had neither parent nor guardian who could have addressed to me any questions on the subject, and I designedly put off sending the customary invitations to the funeral, so that my friends could not arrive in time.

"On returning from the vault I felt not the least weight upon my conscience. I had been cruel, but she had deserved it. I would not hate her—I would forget her. I scarcely thought of her. Never did a man commit an assassination with less remorse than I.

"The countess, so often mentioned, was at the *château* when I returned there. My measures had been so well taken that she also had arrived too late for the interment. On seeing me she appeared greatly agitated. Terror, sympathy, sorrow, or, I know not what, had put so much into her words that I could not understand what she was saying to console me.

"Was I even listening to her? Had I any need of consolation? I was not sad. At last she took me familiarly by the hand, and, dropping her voice, said that she was obliged to confide a secret to me, and that she relied on my honour as a gentleman not to abuse it. She had given my wife a packet of letters to mind, not having been able to keep them in her own house; and these letters she now requested me to return to her. While she was speaking, I several times felt a shudder run through my frame. With seeming coolness, however, I questioned her as to the contents of the letters. At this interrogation the lady started, and replied angrily:

"Sir, your wife has been more generous than you! When she took charge of *my* letters, she did not demand to know what they contained. She even gave me her promise that she would never set

eyes on them, and I am convinced that she never read a line of any one of them. She had a noble heart, and would have been ashamed to forfeit the pledge she had given.'

" 'Very well,' I replied. 'How shall I recognise this packet?'

" 'It was tied with a rose-coloured ribbon edged with silver.'

" 'I will go and search for it.'

" I took my wife's keys, knowing perfectly well where I should find the packet; but I pretended to find it with much difficulty.

" 'Is this it?' I asked the countess, handing it to her.

" 'Yes, yes—that is it! See!—the knot I myself made has never been touched.'

" I dare not raise my eyes to hers; I feared lest she should read in them that I had untied the knot of that packet, and something more.

" I took leave of her abruptly; she sprang into her carriage and drove off.

" The drop of blood had disappeared, the pain was not manifested by any external symptom; and yet the spot marked by the drop burned me as if it had been bitten by a corrosive poison. This pain grows from hour to hour. I sleep sometimes, but I never cease to be conscious of my suffering. I do not complain to anybody: nobody, indeed, would believe my story. You have seen the violence of my torment, and you know how much the two operations have relieved me; but concurrently with the healing of the wound, the pain returns. It has now attacked me for the third time, and I have no longer strength to resist it. In an hour I shall be dead. One thought consoles me; it is that she has avenged herself here below. She will perhaps forgive me above. I thank you for all you have done for me. May heaven reward you."

A few days later one might have read in the newspapers that S—, one of the richest landowners, had blown out his brains. Some attributed his suicide to sorrow caused by the death of his wife; others, better informed, to an incurable wound. Those who best knew him said that he had been attacked by monomania, that his incurable wound existed only in his imagination.

HUNGARIAN

ÁRPÁD BERCZIK

A PURSUIT OF VENUS

STROLLING one day along a street of Pesth with no particular object in view, I suddenly found myself behind two ridiculously small feet. Now I consider myself a born aesthete; and, as one pair of such dainty feet contains more aesthetics than goodness knows how many learned volumes, and further, as I only practise the learned art of aesthetic research on living objects, I had no other choice but to hurry after this pair of aesthetics—I mean, of most precious ankles.

They skipped and floated along with incredible speed—these ankles. I followed with equal haste. Unhappily, when I took a short-cut round a corner I knocked over an old pedlar's wife into the middle of her goods. Her stout figure smashed half her stock, and her language and wrath knew no bounds. She was soon up and after me, and only my dexterity in throwing her a note saved me from her clutches. I think it was a blue note I tossed to her, ten florins, let us say One Pound.

This plaster healed her wounds, and I was left to my pursuit. Anxiously I peered ahead for my feet—that is, her feet (I don't mean those of the pedlar-woman). At last! There they are once more! And, oh! what bliss, in the same moment; she, the owner of those beautiful feet, turns her head and sees me! She floats to the cabstand—one moment of suspense—yes, the feet enter a carriage. I do the same. She is driven off. I after her.

This pleasant drive costs me, including extra charge for extra speed, just five florins.

I think our drivers must have been racing, for the speed was terrific. She stopped her carriage before a shop of high repute. I did the same. She alighted and entered. Must I say that here also I carefully followed her example? Why, by this time our actions nearly marched *au paire*.

In the shop I catch her eye, and critically she measures me from head to foot. At last I'm sure of what up till now had only been surmise—her face was more beautiful than her feet,

her eyes more beautiful than her face, while her figure surpassed them all.

The shopman eyed me wonderingly, and asked, "What is it I can do for you, sir?"

I hesitated. "Will you show me——"

"Silks, please?"—a voice beside me falls on my ear like a silver bell. The sound, so heavenly, almost electrifies me, and I think to myself, thus do angels sing at Christmas time. I repeat the strain—"Please show me silks!"

"What colour?"

Black, obviously. For is not that the colour of her glorious eyes, and hair? So "Black" I answer.

Again the beautiful Unknown deigns to notice me, and a something, a smile, I think, flits quickly over her mobile face. Oh, do not ask me why? I did not even wonder, for where on earth would I again behold such a picture, "A living Venus rummaging among silks!"

That shopman—yes, the awful brute! How he pesters me with questions! Will he never stop! What care I for his goods, how much or what he sells me; if he would stop his twaddle so that I might gaze undisturbed upon my bargaining goddess. Will he never understand that he owes my visit solely to her?—yes, solely to her—her feet, her head, her figure . . .

At last I'm left in peace, my buying finished. But not so my goddess. The bargaining still proceeds, and this Shylock, this monstrosity of a shopkeeper, sticks to his prices like a leech; why—he should go down upon his bended knees and beg her to take his shop, his all. Look—actually he takes his pound of flesh, and in cold blood receipts the bill! While this scene is being enacted my pile of parcels grows; for I had bought still more merely to keep the stage near Venus while she haggled over prices.

When, finally, she tripped daintily away, my purchases filled the cab, and even then I left many parcels behind.

Her carriage speeds away, the pursuit starts afresh. Suddenly my coachman stops. What accident is this? Run over a dog? Good gracious, man, we do not stop for that, away! Alas! too late! for quickly has a hostile crowd collected; an old lady and her mongrel dog are sacred; we are surrounded. Alarmed I view the corpse, distracted I see my Venus's chariot disappearing in the distance; no time to lose, so quickly I fling a handful of coins amongst the rabble: a scuffle—and away we go again, just coming up as my queen gracefully descends, and entering a mansion, leaves me to wait. Another pound is gone. She must be visiting; for her carriage stays—fifteen minutes, how inconsiderate is woman! Opposite the lucky house that holds my goddess a teashop, with its

waitresses convulsed in laughter at my overloaded cab, stands invitingly. To while away the time and warm my stiffening limbs, for it is winter, I go into the teashop. Happy thought—these waitresses will like the splendid things which I bought without looking at. So there they go, and such is fate, that while we so cheerfully together disembark the cargo, my Venus appears, and throwing scorn and contempt heavily in my direction, drives away. . . .

Next day, however, brought me wondrous news ; my valet courts her maid, and, strange to say, could tell me all that I longed to know. For the small sum of twenty shillings I bought news that my goddess was a widow, and I willingly advanced his pay to know her name. His sweetheart, too, was not forgotten, a little " loan " suggested by my valet, to which he no doubt stuck, was her reward.

Beyond this no success would come my way. No mutual friend appeared to introduce us ; my purse could reach no one she knew ; I must have spent quite twenty pounds in vain. Visibly my temper suffered, and I began to grow quite thin and careworn.

" Your honour," said Jancsi, my valet (who was obviously aware of my condition), to me one day, " may I speak ? If your honour would allow me—for adequate payment, may I add—to try my hand at securing an introduction to her ladyship ? "

My heart rejoiced ; yet he must not know this, so I command him harshly to be silent. Suppose he knows a way ?—but no, I cannot stand familiar servants.

" Your honour," he begins again, " I do not wish to be familiar, but I cannot bear to see you suffer. Nearly every day some article of your clothing has to be taken to the tailor's and made smaller. Where is this to end ? I cannot serve a shadow ! "

This decided me. " Yes, my faithful Jancsi," I said, " I agree ; so try your hand, and on the day her ladyship receives me, ten pounds will be yours."

Three days later Jancsi hands me the following letter :

" DEAR SIR—I shall be pleased to be at home at 12.30 noon to-day.
—Yours sincerely, WIDOW VON SZÁNFALVAY."

What happiness, what bliss—joyfully I jump from my arm-chair and nearly embrace my valet ; this magician, this master of diplomacy.

" How did you manage it, my fine fellow ? "

" Pardon me, your honour, I must be most discreet ! If your honour will only punctually present himself, all will be well." Promptly the ten-pound note passes into his keeping.

While helping me into my immaculate clothes, he mentions that Juczi, his sweetheart, our trusted ally, will do the rest ; and adds

that he has never in his life seen me so excited ; and with this I quite agree. At last I'm ready, and punctually at thirty minutes to one I ring the bell at Widow von Szánfalvay's flat.

Juczi opened the door. She seemed excited, but glad to see me there.

"Please come in, milady is expecting you," she whispers, and another bank-note changes hands serenely.

How fitting a place this splendid drawing-room, I thought, to see the first sweet lovelight in her eyes when soon I avow my ardent passion. Ah, here she comes—my angel—my goddess !

My first impulse to fall upon my knees and kiss those little feet I held to be imprudent, so quickly I began :

"A thousand pardons, madam, that——" but smilingly she interrupts and begs me to be seated.

"I am delighted that you came, for otherwise I would have called on you !"

On me ? Great heavens : what do I hear ! * Is it possible ?

"This affair of course interests us both—concerns us both, perhaps I had better say."

The "affair !"—she calls it an affair. What sang-froid, what sublime coolness !

"Then your ladyship knows about this—er—affair ?" I just manage to stammer.

"Know about it ? Why, of course I do. From Jancsi to Juczi, from Juczi to me—what can be more simple ?"

She shrugs her shoulders adorably ; I think her heavenly, and she is mine, yes—mine.

"And your ladyship has no objections ?"

"Objections ? Why, my dear sir" (again the adorable shrug), "the paths of true love should ever be smoothed by those who are interested. There—take my hand and my consent to the marriage."

"To the—marriage ?" Do I hear aright or are my senses wandering ?

"Well—yes."

Immediately I sink upon my knees and grasp her outstretched hand, so soft, so small and—mine, I cover it with kisses.

"A thousand thanks, a million thanks, dear lady !"

Affrighted, she withdraws her hand, and steps back. I feel that my passion has affronted her.

"What has come over you ? Speak," she cried.

"Oh ! forgive me, and thanks, a thousand thanks," I say again, and make my way to her on my hands and knees.

"Sir, pray get up ; I do not understand this joke, nor yet your thanks, nor what they're for."

"Why," said I aghast, "that you gave me your hand and your consent to our marriage."

"To o—u—r marriage? You are joking, sir; for no such thing has ever been mentioned."

"Whose marriage then?" I shrieked.

"Jancsi's and Juczi's: your favourites" (again the adorable shrug). "I have been told they wanted to marry; and Juczi being an orphan and my godchild, I understood you were coming to-day to ask her hand for Jancsi, your valet."

"And this is all you have received me for, dear lady?"

"Certainly. Yet I'm sorry—but as I myself am about to be married again next week. . . ."

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As I gently closed the door of Venus's flat I lit a cigarette, and lost in silent contemplation I tried to portion out the cost of this affair. To whose account is most of it to be charged?

KOLOMAN
MIKSZÁTH 1849-1910

HUNGARIAN

THE KING'S CLOTHES

EVEN chroniclers do not always agree.

When they recorded the history of King Maurus, they neglected to state what land he ruled. That, however, need have no material effect upon your opinion of the story. Who believes, believes. Here is the story as it stands written :

One afternoon King Maurus was making great haste to get through with the wearisome business of empire ; which means that he hastily signed seventy documents, whose contents the minister had read to him in a sing-song voice. His Majesty was stretched out at ease, with closed eyes, listening as calmly as possible to the unavoidable recital. There were numerous appointments, some death-warrants, and various other trifles ; and his Majesty yawned vigorously over each.

" We have finished," at length said the minister, while he tucked the bulky volume of papers under his arm and stuck the seal of state in his waistcoat pocket.

" Wait a moment, Narzis," said the king. " Take the seal out of your pocket and stamp this blank death-warrant, that I may sign it."

" A blank death-warrant, your majesty !" stammered the minister.

" Well, have you anything to say against my wishes ? You probably know that you are my minister and that it is not your business to know why you affix the seal. Narzis, Narzis, you are getting childish ! "

" Oh, oh, your majesty, what nonsense is this ! I am the faithful servant of the best of kings."

Maurus tapped old Narzis indulgently on the shoulder, then took the desired document and hid it in an inner pocket of his clothes, which were of cloth of gold.

" Now, old man, I feel equal to anything. By heaven, it is mine, and I don't mind telling you the use I intend putting it to."

" Most glorious of kings ! " murmured Narzis.

"It is my wish to win the favour of a very beautiful woman. It was she who asked me for this trifle. Of course, you see, I couldn't refuse her such a little thing."

"Your majesty is pleased to be gracious!"

"I am wise, far-sighted, Narzis! You see, the trouble is, the beautiful woman has a husband, but not the power to get rid of him. I give her the power, and she frees herself. Hu-s-h! Narzis!—that is, I think, perhaps, she will."

"It is sweeter to kiss than to kill," insinuated Narvis.

"True it is, old man. I shall take her this document at once, for the favour of the king is a seed that bears good fruit. Write that down in the golden book of my wisdom. Did you write down what I said yesterday about the increase in taxes?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"Let me hear how it sounds."

The minister opened the golden book and read: "A good king is like a gardener who fells many trees."

"That sounds very well," said the king in a satisfied tone, straightening his crown the while and making ready to betake himself to his closed garden by the shore of the sacred Nile.

The servants and courtiers whom he met by the way salaamed to the ground, exclaiming: "Greeting to the great King Maurus!" His gleaming garments of gold dazzled the eye, and it seemed to him that the very earth trembled when he walked.

The nightingale in the garden began to sing of love as if she guessed the king's thoughts, the lilies bowed before him, the roses strewed their petals in his path, and the azalea softly whispered a name, but not that of the great King Maurus—instead, that of Florilla, the beautiful woman, the wife of Rogus, the son of Narzis. It was to her side the king was hastening. The retainers within the palace, meanwhile, were wondering whither the king was going in such haste.

"The king bears some one's head with him," the minister made bold to whisper to his son.

Rogus, then, in sudden fear, thought of his own head and swiftly spoke to the man who watched the gate. "Here is a purse of gold," he said. "Exchange clothing with me and let me enter the garden."

The watchman shook his head. "I dare not," he replied. "The king would make me pay for it with my head when he comes back."

"You are an ass," said Rogus. "The king cannot kill you until he comes back, while I will kill you now if you do not obey; so you see you have a chance to gain time and a purse of gold into the bargain."

The watchman quickly saw the advantage, and the suspicious Rogus slipped into the garden and followed the footsteps of the king.

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"Now, old man, I feel equal to anything. By heaven, it is mine, and I don't mind telling you the use I intend putting it to."

"Most glorious of kings !" murmured Narzis.

"It is my wish to win the favour of a very beautiful woman. It was she who asked me for this trifle. Of course, you see, I couldn't refuse her such a little thing."

"Your majesty is pleased to be gracious!"

"I am wise, far-sighted, Narzis! You see, the trouble is, the beautiful woman has a husband, but not the power to get rid of him. I give her the power, and she frees herself. H-u-s-h! Narzis!—that is, I think, perhaps, she will."

"It is sweeter to kiss than to kill," insinuated Narvis.

"True it is, old man. I shall take her this document at once, for the favour of the king is a seed that bears good fruit. Write that down in the golden book of my wisdom. Did you write down what I said yesterday about the increase in taxes?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"Let me hear how it sounds."

The minister opened the golden book and read: "A good king is like a gardener who fells many trees."

"That sounds very well," said the king in a satisfied tone, straightening his crown the while and making ready to betake himself to his closed garden by the shore of the sacred Nile.

The servants and courtiers whom he met by the way salaamed to the ground, exclaiming: "Greeting to the great King Maurus!" His gleaming garments of gold dazzled the eye, and it seemed to him that the very earth trembled when he walked.

The nightingale in the garden began to sing of love as if she guessed the king's thoughts, the lilies bowed before him, the roses strewed their petals in his path, and the azalea softly whispered a name, but not that of the great King Maurus—instead, that of Florilla, the beautiful woman, the wife of Rogus, the son of Narzis. It was to her side the king was hastening. The retainers within the palace, meanwhile, were wondering whither the king was going in such haste.

"The king bears some one's head with him," the minister made bold to whisper to his son.

Rogus, then, in sudden fear, thought of his own head and swiftly spoke to the man who watched the gate. "Here is a purse of gold," he said. "Exchange clothing with me and let me enter the garden."

The watchman shook his head. "I dare not," he replied. "The king would make me pay for it with my head when he comes back."

"You are an ass," said Rogus. "The king cannot kill you until he comes back, while I will kill you now if you do not obey; so you see you have a chance to gain time and a purse of gold into the bargain."

The watchman quickly saw the advantage, and the suspicious Rogus slipped into the garden and followed the footsteps of the king.

Before him, too, the lilies bowed, roses strewed their brightest petals, and the azalea whispered—Florilla.

A secret door, to which King Maurus possessed the key, led from the garden to the shore of the Nile, by whose side were gleaming villas made for pleasure and for love. Among them was the villa of Rogus, which the king had given to him the summer before in reward for his bravery. At the time of the gift the minister had written in the golden book: "The favour of the king is like a rich harvest."

Rogus kept stealthily following the king. Deep silence reigned on the shore of the Nile, save for the soft ripple of the water. The bright glow in the evening sky coloured it steel-blue, and the shimmering river resembled the blade of a gigantic sword.

When the king came to the dwelling of Rogus, he whistled thrice upon a silver whistle. At this signal a woman appeared upon the balcony. Of her I have only this to say, that the artists of former ages have preserved for the modern world no more beautiful head. There was a certain glory about her face and form. As she leaned down from the balcony in the twilight her luxuriant blond hair shone like the Milky Way.

"Is it you, Florilla?" whispered the king.

Rogus, concealed behind the shrubbery, listened with quick-beating heart to what was about to follow. He knew what it would be, for he had suspected her for a long time.

"It is I, my king, it is I," answered the flute-like voice of Florilla.

"May I come up, my love?"

"Why ask? It is a king's prerogative to command."

"I have given your husband court business to attend to, so that he cannot surprise us, and if it is your wish, he will never come back again. Florilla, here is the death-warrant."

"With the seal of the minister?"

"Certainly."

"That's evil enough of my father," thought Rogus.

"Bring it up to me in an hour," whispered Florilla.

A full hour is a long time for a king to wait, especially when he is in love. It was an evening of tropic heat, relieved by no breath of cooling wind. The Nile was like a mirror. A little bee swam upon a withered flower-petal without suffering shipwreck.

A long time the king sat watching the treacherous water, until a wish rose in his heart, and what a king wishes—! Straightway he seated himself upon the bank by a bit of shrubbery in whose neighbourhood Rogus was concealed—a thousand conflicting plans in his mind—and took from his feet the yellow boots with their golden spurs, laid aside the purple mantle and the orange-coloured,

diamond-studded vest, took the silver whistle from his neck and disrobed leaving his costly garments upon the ground.

The mighty ruler looked around. No one was to be seen. Who, indeed, would dare venture upon the sacred Nile's forbidden shore?

Only the mirroring waters were shameless enough to reflect his royal person. Maurus leaped gladly into the Nile, which swept him softly along, caressing his limbs the while. It was glorious—glorious! The vines upon the trees by the bank formed a fragrant wall, and shining pebbles tickled his feet. When he had bathed enough and the trysting hour was at hand, he left the water to dress and hastened, trembling, to the place where he had left his clothing.

He must have missed the shrub where he left it, so he hastened on. Again he had made a mistake. There, too, nothing of the royal garments was to be seen. Shivering with fear, he ran from place to place.

"Where are my clothes? Who has stolen them?" he cried. "It cannot be a man. Listen, Earth; if you have swallowed them, I will tear up all the grass and trees in my realm!"

He threw himself upon the ground and sobbed bitterly.

Then he jumped up and angrily threatened the moon.

"Shine better, you miserable night lamp, or I will destroy your temple."

But the moon didn't seem inclined to obey; she acted like a bashful maiden, and covered her face with a veil of clouds.

Rain began to fall, and water dripping from dust-laden trees disfigured his face.

In despair he made up his mind to return to the palace and clothe himself afresh. It was a great disgrace for the courtiers and retainers to see him in such a plight. But he soon thought of a remedy for that: he would behead them all, so that no one should betray him. Vain hope. The door was closed, and yet he remembered having hidden the key!

There was nothing to do now but to circle the city and enter by the south gate, and then make his way through numberless streets to the palace.

He must hasten, for it would soon be day. What scornful songs would his subjects not write could they see him in this condition.

Luckily no one saw him. The streets through which he ran were empty.

Only a beggar by the name of Dim lay sleeping with a sack under his head by a temple door.

The king waked him. "Give me your covering at once," he said commandingly.

The frightened beggar lifted his crutch and struck him. "Get out, get out, or I'll strike you again."

The king saw he was the weaker and hastened on.

The watchman was dreaming by the gate when some one struck him.

"Who are you and what do you want?"

"Let me in," commanded the king, in a feverish voice, "and give me your mantle."

The watchman took this as a joke and merely made a face. "Is there anything you want? I'm sorry there isn't a madhouse near."

"I command you to obey at once," insisted the king in a rage.

"Get out!" said the soldier, directing his spear toward the miserable figure, whose feet were bleeding and whose hair was wet and dishevelled.

"Don't you know me?"

"No."

"I am the king."

"Better say his fool. Clear out! You may be thankful that I am too tired to give you a beating."

King Maurus began to say pleasant things, for he had heard that this was the way to get on with underlings. "Listen to me, my brave hero," he said. "While I was bathing in the Nile last evening some one stole my clothing. I swear to you that I am King Maurus!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the soldier. "The king is up there asleep."

Weak and weary, Maurus turned about to make his way, under shelter of the wall, to the villa of his beloved. There he would knock, and beg some garments. Upon his lips fearful words trembled. He would destroy the entire city, annihilate it, just so soon—just so soon—just so soon as he had a mantle. A mantle? What? Then that's the way a king reigns, is it? A king is nothing but his clothes and insignia of rank. He caught sight of Dim. The old beggar was already up and waiting for a wine-shop to open.

"Give me your mantle," said the king humbly.

The beggar threw him a disdainful glance. "Ah-ha! we are not so high and mighty, I see! Where did you pawn your clothes for drink? Who plundered you like that? It's a shame for wine-dealers to pluck their customers. If I were the king I'd hang them all."

"That's just what I'll do," sighed Maurus. "Give me your mantle, and I'll do it."

"What, you will hang the rascals? Who are you?"

"I am the king."

Dim looked at him in amazement.

"Haven't you seen my face on the gold coins?"

"I never had any gold," said the beggar, giving the king the mantle.

Now he could hasten to the villa of Rogus ! In spite of the early hour, a crowd of people were assembled by the gate as if in expectation. They were talking in whispers. The king recognised several of his faithful courtiers ; they avoided him that his mantle might not soil their dainty attire. The king walked up, and striking the gate with his fist, called : " Open ! I am the king ! I command it ! "

" Poor idiot ! " laughed the watchman.

Maurus then turned in despair toward the lookers-on. " Do you not know me ? My good subjects, look at me, I am your ruler. "

A laugh was the answer.

" Kabul, I gave you an estate a few weeks ago—why are you silent ? And you, Niles, whom I took from the gutter—will you deny me ? "

But neither Kabul nor Niles recognised the king.

" Ingratitude, ingratitude ! " he exclaimed. " Where is your mistress ? Where is Florilla ? She will recognise me. "

Just as he said this a herald entered, upon whose uplifted spear was a woman's head. " Here is Florilla ! " he cried.

It was indeed she, who would never recognise him again. She was silenced forever. The bright hair still rippled about the beautiful head and fell almost to the spear's end. The people yelled in triumph.

" Who dared do this thing ? " the king exclaimed.

No one answered him. His curiosity was satisfied shortly. The herald nailed a death-warrant upon the gate that the people might read the royal signature and see the minister's seal, testifying that the deed had been done according to the requirements of the law.

Maurus, beside himself with fear, sank to the ground, exclaiming : " Perhaps I am not King Maurus—not King Maurus at all ! "

The crowd increased. Knights and ladies came once more to look upon the beautiful severed head, which would receive no more caresses nor again arouse love or envy. The beggar, too, came to enjoy the scene. Those upon whom the king had bestowed wealth and station did not trouble themselves about him. The beggar came up to him.

" Come away from here, good man, " he said, " the lords will knock you down and trample upon you and tear up that mantle of mine, " and he seized the king by the hand and led him away. He did not care what happened ; he had no will of his own.

When he reached the great square his eyes lit up with courage, for he saw Narzis, the minister, standing at a corner of the street. He hastened to overtake and embrace him. " Narzis, Narzis, dear old fellow, " he cried, " it's luck for me to find you. "

The minister, in anger, made haste to free himself. "What folly is this?" he demanded.

"You do not recognise me? You, too, do not recognise me? Am I not really the king?"

"No, certainly not," replied the minister. "But you imitate his voice pretty well, if you were not so hoarse," and he struck him good-naturedly with the gold-headed cane the king had given him on his fiftieth birthday. In the merriest frame of mind the minister entered the palace.

With humble reverence the servants opened the doors as he passed from room to room on his way to the last *salon*, where he was to await his sovereign, when, to his surprise, Rogus, clad in cloth of gold, stepped out to meet him. Rogus then proceeded to tell him all that had happened; how he had overheard the king's interview with Florilla, and how, in the king's clothes, he had entered the castle and placed Florilla's name upon the death-warrant.

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The rest of the affair the chroniclers relate, but I will not repeat it, because I do not believe it myself.

SERBIAN

SVETOZAR
CHOROWICH

DEADLY ENEMIES

WE were travelling together. I had only one horse with me, a good horse—I know it was a good horse because I had fallen from it several times; I generally fall only from good horses. It stepped proudly and quickly, and carried its head high in the air. My companion rode quietly and peacefully upon his white mare, four or five pack-horses, which carried no burdens, followed him.

He was a well-built man, tall and broad-shouldered, a trifle cadaverous, pale-faced; but the national costume, with its multitude of glittering buttons on the front of the jacket, and the bright silk kerchief wound around his head, with its ends hanging over his shoulders and falling upon his breast, became him so well that I could not take my eyes from him, and was afraid to speak, for fear of spoiling the pleasure I had in silently contemplating him.

His name was Dioko Mraowich.

I had heard wonderful stories about him. He was much praised by the people as an incomparable Yunak (brave fellow) and cautious Hiduk (bandit), who had for some time terrorized the greater part of Herzegovina, and that was why he had such a great interest for me.

"Why do you have so many pack-horses with you, when you do not carry any loads?" I asked, after the long silence, trying to draw him into conversation.

"I carried my loads into the city, from which I am now returning."

"What did you carry?"

"Various things: bread, potatoes, cabbages."

"And to whom?"

"To the children of the late Ali Muyagich."

I stopped and looked at him in astonishment. Ali Muyagich had been one of the bravest and most ferocious Turks, and what is more—the deadly enemy of the Mraowiches.

"Why, have you leased a farm from them?"

"No, but I am in their debt, very much in their debt."

He grew silent, bent his head and struck his horse on the neck, though the animal was going quickly. The horse reared and swerved. He struck it once more and then it again went straight ahead.

Seeing this, I did not care to inquire any further and, loosening the bridle, I began to sing in a low tone; I cannot recollect now what kind of a song it was.

He seemed to like it, for he made his horse ride close to mine, and listened attentively.

"Sing louder!"

I lifted my voice. He pulled the kerchief which bound his head farther down the nape of his neck and accompanied my song by nods of his head.

At last I stopped.

"Go ahead!"

"I don't know any more of it."

He turned away displeased, pulled at the bridle and turned to the path which led to the woods.

"Where are you going?"

"To the woods; let us rest a little."

I followed him. On reaching the woods we dismounted and, leaving the horses to graze, sat down under the shadow of a mighty oak and, taking out our tobacco-pouches, filled our pipes.

We sat quietly, listening to the munching of the horses and the far-away tap of a woodpecker.

"When did you become the debtor of Ali?" I at last broke the silence and questioned him, just to start a conversation.

Dioko frowned and replied with a wave of the hand:

"A long time ago."

"And have you paid your debt already?"

"Oh, no; it will take considerable time before I will be able to pay it."

After emitting two or three clouds of smoke, he looked at me for a moment and said:

"It is a long story to tell—and though it is not very pleasant for me, I shall nevertheless relate it to you:

"Turkish atrocities had forced me to become a bandit. I had tired of the life of a Turkish subject without any human rights; I was weary of bowing to everybody and of being despised—so I took a musket and, with half a dozen companions, left for the woody hills. Here we watched for the Turks and fell upon them. Not a day passed without a skirmish, and we always got away with something. At last, we had to meet and square up our accounts with the Muyagiches—we attacked their house and killed three of the family, but Ali succeeded in escaping; we could not find him,

though we searched for a long time. We pillaged the house and returned to our den laden with rich spoils.

"But we paid dearly for it. Ali gathered a much stronger force than ours, and gave us chase over hills and dales till they drove us into a wilderness, where even the mountain goats do not go. Here we fortified ourselves and determined to fight to the death. Ali and his followers surrounded us and laid siege. A time of terrible privation and suffering began for us. We had neither bread nor water, no one dared to steal out and try to get some; we were dying of hunger and thirst. My companions walked about with gloomy faces, but not one of them uttered a reproach, groaned or bewailed his fate.

"At last I came to the conclusion that it could go no further, and I said to my companions:

"See here, brothers, don't you think it would be better to make a break, fall upon our enemies and, having revenged ourselves, die like men, rather than perish here from hunger? Die we must, so why not die fighting, instead of carrying to the next world the longing for Turkish blood?"

"They all understood that I was right—that there was no other way out of it, and they agreed to my proposition.

"I was the first to leap out with my yataghan in my hand; after me came the others. The Turks met us with a brisk fire. I saw two of my comrades fall; well, I thought, I have no other choice—and I threw myself upon the enemy, the others following suit. My eyes were bloodshot, I could see nothing. I only waved my yataghan in the air and ran forward. Suddenly I received a terrible blow from behind and I became unconscious.

"When I awakened I found myself in the house of Muyagich—I lay upon a matting, and several Turks, among whom was Ali Muyagich, were standing over me, shaking their heads. When I opened my eyes Ali bent over me and took my hand.

"How do you feel?" he asked.

"I tried to rise, but I suffered as much pain as if I had received another blow—and once more lost consciousness.

"A whole month I lay at death's door and Ali did not leave my side for a moment, tending me more carefully than my own father could have done; he changed my bandages with his own hands, gave me to drink and fed me like a baby, begging me to eat when I had no appetite; sometimes he used to lay my head upon his knees and almost force me to eat eggs or meat, by putting them into my mouth.

"At last I began to recuperate, and as soon as I felt that I could stand on my feet I rose, and holding to the walls, began to walk about the room. Ali often took my arm and led me into the courtyard, where I rested under the shade of his mulberry trees.

"I became stronger with each passing day, and I saw how Ali's face brightened when he smilingly looked at me.

" 'What do you think, can you jump?' he once asked me.

" 'I cannot,' I replied. 'I am still too weak.'

" He stroked his mustachios and laughed :

" 'Soon, oh, very soon, you will be able to do so.'

" A few days later he repeated his question.

" 'I will try,' I said.

" He stepped aside. I started to run and jumped. The jump was so high that Ali laughed with glee.

" 'That means you are entirely well,' he said.

" He left me in the courtyard, and went into the house. I looked after him, greatly perplexed. A moment later, he returned with two loaded muskets in his hands. His face was deadly pale, his eyes glittering wildly like those of a hungry cat.

" 'Now I have cured you and put you on your legs,' he said, standing before me. 'Now you are as well as before you were wounded and are able to pay the debt you owe me—and you owe me a good deal—three whole heads, because you murdered my two brothers.' Here his eyes began to glitter even more terribly than before and his lower jaw trembled. 'I could have killed you when you lay before me wounded, but I did not wish to do so. I wanted to cure you, then kill you. Ali Muyagich never killed a helpless enemy and would not make an exception of you.'

" He handed me one of the muskets and added :

" 'Here is a musket! It is as good and as strong as mine and just as well loaded. Let us go into the forest and try the power of our arms.'

" I did not find a word to say and went forward sadly, with bowed head.

" So we came into the forest.

" 'Stand where you are,' he said, 'I shall place myself here so that we shall face each other. Let us fire simultaneously, right here on the spot.'

" But now I had time to recover my senses. I threw away my musket and stepped aside.

" 'And should I lift my hand against you? Do you think I could be mean enough to fire at you! For no consideration in the world!'

" 'You must! I shall force you!' he said with a contemptuous smile. 'I cannot postpone the combat, and I don't want to fire at an unarmed man. Take the musket! I am not joking with you.'

" I did not move.

" 'Take the musket, I say!' he shouted, 'or I will call you a hare!'

"I bent down and picked up the musket.

" 'Turn this way!'

"I turned.

" 'Aim at me!'

"He aimed at me, and I pointed my rifle at him.

"He fired, and his shot resounded through the forest.

"I do not remember whether I pulled the trigger or not—only when I looked at him, he staggered and fell. I screamed in agony, and flew to his side. But he was dead.

"Since then, every year, I deliver several loads of potatoes and cabbages to his children. I also bring them sheep and cows for their support."

Dioko ended his story and sat with bowed head, straining hard to hold back the tears which were streaming down his cheeks.

XAVER
SANDOR-GJALSKI

CROATIAN

NAJA

I HAD for some time past suspected that Pero, my colleague in the Government office at D——, was a very unhappy man. He was too reserved and silent to have spoken of his sorrow to any one, but it was impossible to be with him much and not realise that this man's soul was weighed down by some terrible grief. His whole personality breathed unceasing melancholy—a melancholy that could not be concealed, so much a part of himself had it become.

One mild summer evening, he and I walked together along the banks of the Danube below D——. The dark waves gave back in bright reflection the silvery stars above us and the soft clouds that flitted across the moon. The wind brought us from the village the faint sounds of violins and pipes; the sweet tones of the nightingale came clear from out the rushes by the Bacska. The water murmured gently beneath us, and from a dark mass of buildings just ahead the groaning of mill-wheels could be heard. There was something exquisitely sweet about the evening quiet. Suddenly, from somewhere, from the mill or from an invisible boat, a girl's voice, fresh and clear, broke out on the stillness. Pero started and stopped in his slow sauntering. He trembled like a reed. "Her song! her song!" he stammered, and would not move. We stood motionless, listening, until the song died away in the darkening shadows. Then he turned from the water, caught my arm, and began to talk, breathlessly, unasked. It was the story of his sorrow. I give it in his own words.

I think of her always, and my whole being quivers anew each day in anguish and in helpless longing; in the pain of sweet memories, and in horror of what happened later. My mind clings hungrily to the vision of her beauty, her name comes to my lips, I stretch out my arms longingly, yet I know that she is dead. I see her before me every moment, my poor, poor Naja, the beautiful peasant girl from the obscure Slavonic village. Words cannot describe her beauty. Even now, after so many years have passed, it still seems

to me that those great dark eyes, the exquisite oval of her face framed in raven hair, the sweet expression of gentle seriousness, the warm coloured skin and graceful slender form—that all this most beauty has not its equal on earth. And yet I did not love her—at least I did not think that I loved her, until I had lost her forever. God is just—and terrible.

I saw her first in the forest. I had been hunting, but the heat compelled me to seek a shady spot to rest. She stood near her herd, sewing busily at some bright-coloured garment. I could not take my eyes from her. I was dazed. I had never seen such beauty. A gentle seriousness in her manner made it impossible to treat her as one would treat a peasant girl met in this chance way. I think I merely asked her the nearest road to the village.

She did not answer me at first. She bent over her sewing without once glancing up at me. When I repeated my question she gave me a short and not very friendly reply, pointing along the way I had to go.

"Isn't it hot to-day?" I began again, taking off my hat to wipe my forehead. I pulled the strap of my gun over my head, and sat down on the nearest tree stump.

The girl paid no attention to me. "Who are you, child?" She did not answer, and moved away from me, turning to look after the herd.

"Well, can't you open your mouth?" I asked, angry now. "Can't you tell me your name?"

"What's my name to you? I come from the village there," she answered brusquely, and turned as if to go. She rolled up her sewing and called in the calves that were scattering afield.

"Why, can't one even ask your name? There's nothing unusual about that. Are you Tejka, or Miljenka, or Mara?"

"No, I am Naja—Toscha Nedeljovic's Naja." She blushed and ran away.

"Hunting go hang!" I exclaimed, and followed in the direction she had taken, hoping to meet her again.

After that I went to the woods every day, and met Naja there. She was afraid of me at first, and if she answered at all, her words were not friendly. I became shy myself in her presence, which may have helped to make her less shy and more accustomed to me. Finally she became quite confidential, and told me that I was different from most gentlemen. She chattered to me about her little household cares and worries, about the doings in the village, and said that the boys were angry because she would not join them in the spinning-room, or dance with them.

"And why don't you do this?" I asked.

"I don't know. I don't want to; and then, they say many

things happen in the spinning-room. But I'm only joking; father says we peasants haven't much cause for laughing. He means because of the new division of the land."

"You mean the new survey?"

"Yes, tell me, sir—" and she began to ask me about "right and law" and "new land survey," and couldn't hear enough about it. Finally I said, "But all that's for men to think about, Naja. It's no affair for any girl."

"I suppose so. But I can talk to you about it. I can't talk to any one else. They all say in the village that our priest is in with the surveyors and will consent that the manor lord shall have our old graveyard for his share, and that they shall build us a new graveyard 'way out in the forest."

"Well, what does that matter to you?"

"What does it matter to me? Why, our grandfathers and great-grandfathers are buried there, father says. Our village has always had that churchyard ever since our ancestors came in from Bosnia. And now they're going to let the Count drive his cows there, and they'll bury us out in the forest with the wolves and foxes."

I looked at her in astonishment. She was quite pale and gazed at me with eyes like those of the Montenegrin girl in Cermak's painting of the "Death of the Voivode."

Apart from this, our meetings were very simple and commonplace. I did not realise, therefore, how much I had come to be interested in her. Not until the last moment did I understand—not until it was too late!

One day I left the house at the first greying of dawn for a day's hunting. When I reached the village, all was quiet as at night. My road led me past the Nedeljovic house. I saw Naja in the garden at the well. She had just washed her face and was combing out her long locks. She was beautiful—so fresh—so fair! The dim light flickered over the loose strands of her black hair, fell on the curve of her throat, and crept through her half-opened chemise revealing the beauty of her youthful breast. I lost all control of myself at this moment. I sprang to her side—she had not seen me—caught her in my arms and kissed her.

She tore herself away with a little scream that was half a laugh. She thought it was one of the village youths and was neither alarmed nor very angry. But when she turned, and recognised me, the saucy smile fled from her lips. Her eyes dropped, and she crossed her arms in confusion above her bared breast. I was sorry for what I had done, but I stammered: "O Naja, my own beautiful Naja!"

"If you really cared for me, you wouldn't have done that," she answered in a voice that trembled sadly, and turned slowly towards

the house. I stared foolishly after her, hardly believing that a peasant girl could feel so keenly. I began to realise that Naja was different from other girls. And now I had offended her, had treated her as I would have treated any chance-met village beauty.

My heart was heavy as I watched her halting beside a flower-bed to wipe away her tears. I was ashamed to approach her again. She glanced toward me, saw me still standing there, and I seemed to see a flash of happiness in her tear-dimmed eyes. The sun had risen above the horizon, a pale rose flush danced over the moist leaves of the plum trees, and sparkled in the dewy grass. The world was bathed in rose and white; only the distant valleys trembled still in violet shadows; the young freshness of the morning sparkled like the happy smile of an awakening child. Above me, in the green, trilled a tiny bird voice. My breast heaved and swelled, happy longing filled my heart, and I did not stop to ask if it were only the sunlight that shone in her face. "Naja, Naja!" I cried in glad triumph, and started toward her. Just then I heard my name called behind me, in laughing tones; I turned and saw my friend Geza, the squire of the village, hunter like myself, and a great joker besides.

I was ashamed of my feelings, alarmed at what he might have seen, and, alas for my cowardice, I was much relieved when I saw that he took it for an ordinary passing flirtation.

I strolled off with him and did not once turn to look at Naja. I dared not go to her that day, nor the next, nor the next. On the fourth day, however, I was obliged to leave for a distant part of the country on Government business. I was kept there for four months, and would possibly have had to remain still longer, had I not been suddenly recalled on "important service."

Twelve hours later I learned what this important service was. The people of Naja's village had revolted against the new surveying and apportioning of the land. The Count's farm hands, sent out with their ploughs to work in the fields that had hitherto belonged to the peasants, had been beaten and wounded. The commission sent to close the old graveyard had been threatened and chased away. The peasants imprisoned their priest, their bailiff, and their town council in the jail, and carried off the cattle of the manor, which had been sent out to pasture on the former village common. It was a full-fledged revolution. No one dared enter the village. The country magistrate wired for military assistance, and ordered me to take command of the civil proceedings. Unfortunately—to my shame, I had almost said—I had the reputation of being energetic. This reputation was what caused me to be sent for in such serious cases. I do not know whether I really possessed so much energy, but I do know that I was always able to break the

most stubborn resistance, not only among the peaceful Slavonians, but also among the Zagorians, in whose veins the blood of the peasant King Gubec still flows. To-day—yes, I am no longer so energetic. But I was young and foolish then, and believed in the might and majesty of the law, of the State and society, and held it my sacred duty to defend this might. What a fool I was! And all this foolishness clothed itself in such high-sounding words—as indeed they were necessary to cover its nakedness and falsity! But I believed in the nonsense, and felt myself justified in having no consideration whatever for the rebellious peasants.

I did not worry about my power to break this rebellion. I believed the news exaggerated, and waited quietly for the time when I should enter the village with my battalion of soldiers. I was glad of the chance to see Naja again. I had quite forgotten my conversation with her about the surveying. It would have been better if I had thought of it in time. I did not connect the revolution with Naja in any way, although my landlady told me that a peasant girl had called several times during my absence and asked for me.

“Was it Naja?”

“I don’t know what her name was, but she was mighty pretty. You ought to know, sir, I suppose”; the old woman grinned and shook her fingers at me.

“Stop that nonsense——”

But she interrupted me. “She brought something for you—an embroidered cloth.”

“Didn’t you tell her where I had gone?”

“Ha! ha! No! you were so far away; and then I thought you mightn’t like it. I don’t know what’s come to the girls nowadays, they don’t seem to have any sense of shame. I thought you’d hear of it soon enough.”

“Oh, don’t talk nonsense,” I cried, and hurried away to buy a present for Naja. I was all eagerness to meet her. And it was more of this meeting than of my duties that I was thinking as we moved on to the village.

When we arrived there I saw that the reports had not been exaggerated. A few moments more and we would have come too late to save the priest and Council. Their prison was already on fire. We had little trouble in the village, for we found but few people there. In the fields some of the peasants were holding fast to the ploughs of the manor, but they fled when they saw the bayonets. The trouble came at the entrance to the woods and on the pasture-land, where shots were exchanged. But the most serious meeting was at the graveyard. Almost the entire population of the village had congregated here. Young and old, men, women,

and children, almost all armed in some way. A ragged boy was beating a drum like mad. Before we reached them we heard the din of shouts, laughter, cheers and oaths. "Let them scream," I thought. "That's a good sign. Barking dogs don't bite." Sudden silence greeted our arrival. The gleam of massed bayonets has something terrifying in it, and it did not fail in its effect here. A pause ensued, during which I called to the people to separate quietly. My voice did not have its usual strength and firmness, so my words were soon drowned in a rush of yells.

"We won't have it! The priest and the Council have betrayed us! They have got the best land and are in with the manor people! What shall we do if they take everything away from us? And the greedy wolves aren't satisfied with our land alone, now they want our graveyard, where our grandfathers and great-grandfathers are buried for generations."

Suddenly I remembered Naja's words. I stared into the crowd, seeking her. With relief I saw she was not there, but something still troubled me. For the first time I stood undecided what to do. What if she should see me here? What would she think of me? These thoughts shot through my brain. She would hate me. The devil! Why did they have to choose me for this horrid work?

As I stood hesitating the tumult increased rapidly. A maddened beast or an angry man always takes indecision for a sign of weakness. The revolting peasants pressed forward on to the soldiers. My brain whirled. With all my strength I strove to control myself, and gave the command for a charge. The peasants met the onrushing soldiers with stones and shots. The shedding of blood seemed inevitable. But I gave command to shoot into the air at first. The peasants divined the intention, and would not move from their places.

"You daren't shoot! We're the Emperor's subjects and he wouldn't allow us to be murdered. We're not afraid!"

This was their answer to the harmless volley. The crowd began to jeer at the soldiers and pressed forward angrily. A skirmish ensued, during which four soldiers and about fifteen peasants fell. At last the villagers fled and we took possession of the churchyard.

Suddenly a woman appeared on the hill opposite. Her voice rang out clear as she called to the fleeing crowd.

"You cowards! You run away at the first shot! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves! He who would show himself a man, come over here by me! Where will you go if they take even the graves of your fathers from you? Let them come—here is a target for their shots! Well, brave soldiers, if you are such heroes, fire here; aim at my breast!"

I recognised Naja's voice, I saw her white blouse part over the

curve of her beautiful bosom. It is incredible, but in this terrible moment I was conscious only of her beauty. It was several seconds before I realised the gravity of the situation. The blood rushed to my temples. I stood as if turned to stone. A scream aroused me. I know nothing of the next moment. I do not know whether I gave any order, by word or gesture. I could see then, as I see now, only the one terrible picture: Naja on the hilltop there. I saw her throw up her arms, a red stream run down her breast, saw her stagger and fall.

Forgetting everything else, I rushed to her side. She could not speak when I threw myself down beside her, but she tried to raise her head. I bound up the wound and carried her through the crowd in my arms. The revolt was over. As the dying girl lay on my breast, as I was about to lose her forever, then I realised that I loved this poor little creature with the strongest love a human heart can feel.

That was the punishment for my sin in believing class-made laws to be higher than the will of the people.

In her delirium, she spoke only of me, of our meetings. Then she began to sing a low rhythmic chant like the faint humming of a bee. Snatches of a sad old folk-song mingled with the moan. It will always ring in my memory. I could not control my tears and buried my head, sobbing, in the pillows.

When I had recovered from the first outburst of grief, I saw her wide-opened eyes fixed upon me. A gleam of consciousness awoke in them, the tears welled up, and she looked at me with a long, long glance of love and sorrow, a glance that will live in my soul as long as I myself have life.

With her last breath all joy departed from my life. Can anything more terrible come to a man than to murder one he loves? I had become her murderer in the service of those who oppress the people.

Leave me now—and remember this—*the voice of the people is the voice of God!*

Two years later, when I heard that Pero had fallen in the battle of Zajcar, I could only praise God for his release from suffering. But when I think of Naja, the peasant girl, a feeling of glad confidence comes over me. A people with such daughters need have no fear for the future!

RUMANIAN

MICHAEL
SANDOVEANU

COSMA RACOARE

COSMA was a man of might ! I utter the name and seem to see him : the dark man upon his roan horse, I see two steely eyes, and the thick moustaches shadowing his mouth—a rough man was Cosma ! Eternally upon horseback, gun slung across his shoulder, a yard-long knife in his leathern belt—thus his vision appears before me.

I am an old man, nigh a hundred years old ; I have wandered about a deal in the world, have seen men and things, but such a soul as Cosma Racoare's I have seen but once ! He was no giant in nature, but of middle size. Large-boned he was and tanned by the sun like many another, but he was like no other. A look into his eyes was enough. He was a *man* !

That was a time of great affliction to this poor land of ours. Turks and Greeks flooded our good Rumanian earth and men dwelt in sorrow and lamentation. What a time ! Only Cosma was untouched by the universal woe. To-day he was here, to-morrow yonder, care-free and calm. All men fled from the enemies who laid waste our land ; he remained. They snared him and put him in chains. He touched the chains with his hand, shook them off, threw himself into the saddle and rode afar. It was written in the Book of Life that he was charmed against bullets : only a bullet of silver could touch him. Find me to-day such a man ! Those were heroic times ! have you heard tell of that other young hero, the son of the fair-haired maid ? He was just such another ! He plundered over there in Wallachia, Cosma in Moldavia, and in the night they met at Milcov and exchanged their booty. Did the border sentinels wish to catch them ? They tried. But Cosma's horse flew like a ghost ; their bullets did not reach him. It is a far way from the hills of Baczu to the border ; to make that distance twice in a night is not easy. To Cosma and his roan it was child's play.

Thus passed his life in the forests and wide fields ; he knew neither

care nor fear nor love—till at last love gripped even him. A glorious man. I see him as though it were to-day!

In those days there dwelt in the manor of Vulturesti a Greek, and here upon our lands dwelt in a ruined castle a Rumanian woman of very wonderful beauty. The Greek loved her, and no one marvelled thereat. She had eyebrows curved like bows, and witch's eyes. Against her will she had been married to Dimitru Covas, who had died, and now Sultana, the young widow, ruled her possessions alone.

Now, as I have told you already, Nicola Zamfirido, the Greek, was nigh to perishing for the love of this woman. How had he not wooed her? What means had he left untried? How many sooth-sayers and workers of magic had he not consulted? In vain. The lady would have none of him and there the matter rested. Was he ugly or deformed? God forbid. He was a proud Greek, brown eyed, black bearded, tall and good to behold. What did it matter? She would not have him.

Upon a day sat Nicola in his chamber and thought and thought. How he yearned to possess the young widow! Why did she disdain his wooing? A few days before he had stood with a gipsy beneath her walls and had had a very sweet song sung to her. The house had remained silent. What was to be done? Nicola thought: "I am not ugly. I am not stupid. Why will she not have me? Does she love another? No, I have had her watched through long nights. No one entered."

Nicola was wroth. He arose and went out. His grooms were washing the horses in the yard. "Is that a kempt horse?" he cried, and his whip clicked on a boy's back. A few steps farther he met his gardener resting in the sun. "Is it thus that I am served?" And the gardener felt the lash.

But what is the good of wreaking one's anger on innocent folk? He went into the garden, sat down on a stone bench under the linden tree, and thought—and thought. The autumnal wind had seared the foliage. There was a great sadness in the air. The leaves fluttered from the branches, trembling like butterflies through the stillness of the day. Under the pear tree lay a heap of red leaves like drops of blood. Nicola sat thinking. "What is life worth, if she will not even look at me?" He gazed upon the fallen leaves and sighed.

"Vasile, Vasile!" he calls of a sudden.

A vigorous old man enters through the gate.

"Vasile," says the master, "help me!" The old man stands before him, sighs, and hesitates.

"Vasile, can you not help me?"

"I know not, master."

"Bethink yourself. You are always full of good counsel; help me now! The old witch is helpless; the gipsy is helpless. Stand by me now——"

"I know not——"

"Do not desert me, Vasile."

"I should like to speak, but I dare not."

"Here is a ducat; speak!"

Vasile hardly looks at the ducat.

"I know, master, that you will give me two ducats, even three—but—the thing is hard. Listen! If I were you I would go to Frasini, force my way into my lady's chamber, and carry her away! That would I do!"

"You mean what you say, Vasile! Would it be possible?" Vasile is silent. Nicola rests his forehead on his hand. Then he says:

"I will try it!"

"I knew that the advice was worth two ducats," sighs Vasile.

On the same night Nicola mounts his horse, takes five strong fellows with him, and away they go to Frasini.

The autumn wind roared in the wood. The men rode on in silence.

From afar they heard the cocks crow in the villages. There was no other sound. At last they saw the lady's castle. It lay there in the black night like a mountain of coal.

Nicola and his companions approach the wall like shadows; quietly they dismount. They throw rope-ladders over the walls and scale them. Cries for help resound; but Nicola knows no fear. The doors are broken down; they rush into the corridors.

"Ah," sighs the Greek, "at last I have you!"

But suddenly a door opens and a stream of light floods the passage. Nicola fearlessly presses forward. There on her chamber's threshold stands the lady Sultana. Her hair is loose and she wears a long white garment. Her eyes are dark as she stands there and looks at Nicola. He is beside himself. He could kneel down and kiss her feet. But he knows that she would laugh at him.

"Hold!" she cries; "I thought it was a thief! But 'tis only you, good Master Nicola."

And suddenly there flashes in her hand a gleaming scimitar and its flat side comes down on Nicola's head. He stands quite still. His men hurry in, but one falls. The lady's men rush in from all sides and Nicola and his companions retreat. They reach the courtyard, mount, and flee to Vulturesti.

"God have mercy upon me!" sighs Nicola, "I am a wretched creature! What shall I do now?" And all that October night he lies awake, thinking deeply. "Woe is me, woe is me!" he

groans, "I am wretched." He presses his brow with both hands. "What a wonderful woman; what eyes! Lord, Lord, leave me not, for I perish." And he dreams—and he dreams! "What a wonderful woman; what eyes!"

He arises and calls Vasile.

"Vasile, I am back, covered with shame. What a woman! My soul desires her. Help me and I will give you two ducats——"

Vasile answers quietly:

"I know how you have fared. A proud woman, truly. And I know that I shall receive five or even six ducats, for I know a way."

"Speak, Vasile, quickly, for I perish!"

"Truly, master, what are the seven ducats to me? But you will give me seven times seven when the lady rests there next to your heart. Yes, she will rest next your heart. I will bring to you—Cosma Racoare! Even as you will place the ducats into my hand, so will he place the lady into your arms—even so——"

When Nicola heard the name of Cosma Racoare he started; then he sighed, and said: "It is well!"

On the third day came Cosma. Nicola sat on the stone bench under the linden tree and smoked fragrant tobacco. When he saw Cosma he gave him a long look. The man came slowly, his left hand on his horse's neck. He wore high boots with iron spurs. His jacket came down to his leathern belt. On his back hung his rifle; on his head sat the high cap of black sheep's wool. He walked slowly, his horse following with bent head.

Vasile approached his master and said: "Look upon that man, master, he will fetch you the devil from hell."

Nicola stared at the man. Cosma stood still and said quietly: "God be with you."

"I thank you," said Vasile, "and with you."

The master remained silent.

"And so you have come to us, brother Cosma?" murmured Vasile.

"I have come," answered Cosma.

"To help us with our plan?"

"Yes."

Cosma's face was so grave it seemed as if no smile had ever shone upon it.

"Yes, yes, you are here," said Nicola, as if awakening from a deep slumber; "Vasile, fetch the coffee, and be quick."

"I do not drink coffee," said Cosma.

"You do not drink," Nicola repeated dreamily. "You have come in order to help me—to be sure. How much would you have? Fifty ducats?"

"Yes."

"Vasile, get the money-bag."

"Nay," said Cosma, "I need no money."

"What?" cried Nicola, "you do not need it?"

"It's a bargain. I am to fetch you the mistress of Frasini. I give you the woman, you give me the money, thus——"

Short and sweet," cried Vasile. "he gives you the lady; you give him the money. Did I not say he could fetch you the devil from hell? The lady is as good as yours."

Cosma returned to the garden, tied his horse to a tree, wrapped himself in his cloak, and lay down.

"Yes, yes, he is a man, a man," sighed Nicola.

When it grew dark Cosma drew tight his horse's saddle-girth and mounted. He said to Nicola:

"Master, await me in the meadow!"

The gates opened, the horse whinnied and flew away like an arrow.

The light of the full moon pierced the autumnal mists and wove a curtain of light over silent hill and dark forest. Only the horse's hoofs clattered away the silence. Cosma rode silently under the cover of the autumn woods; he looked like a ghost in the bluish light.

He reached Frasini. Every one slept; the gates were closed. Cosma knocked.

"Who knocks?" they cried from within.

"Open!" said Cosma.

"Who are you?"

"Open!" thundered the voice of Cosma. Whispers and murmurs were heard within.

"How long am I to be kept waiting?"

"We cannot open!"

"Open! It is I—Cosma Racoare!"

A light appeared at the door, vanished, and the bolts flew back.

Cosma rode into the courtyard, and dismounted. He entered the inner door.

"The door is open," he said to himself, "the woman is brave——"

His spurs clanked in the dark passage as in a church. There was a noise in some room. A ray of light flooded the passage. Sultana appeared upon the threshold of her chamber. Her hair was loose and she wore a white garment.

"Who are you? What do you seek?" she cried.

"I have come to fetch you for Master Nicola," said Cosma calmly.

"Is that why you have come?" She raised her weapon. "I'll show you, you and your Master Nicola."

Cosma went one step nearer. He grasped the lady's wrist, and the sword flew far. The lady cried :

"Gabriel! Niculai! Toador! Help!"

The men burst in and remained standing at the door. Cosma approached her again. The lady darted from him and seized a dagger.

"Why do you stand there, cowards? Bind him!"

"Lady," said Cosma, "why lose words? I see that you are brave. It avails little."

And the servants whispered :

"How can we bind him, lady? It is Cosma, Cosma Racoare. He is charmed."

"Wretches!" cried the lady and threw herself upon Cosma. He caught her wrists, tied them with thongs, and lifted her.

"Make way," he said quietly, and the men made way.

"What a woman!" thought Cosma as he strode down the hall with her, "what a woman! Nicola has chosen well."

Sultana stared with dazed eyes at her men. Then she looked upon the steely eyes and tanned face of him who held her.

"Who are you?"

"Cosma Racoare."

She looked at the frightened servants and kept silent. Now she understood.

When they were without, Cosma mounted and set the lady on the horse before him. Again the hoofs clattered through the silence of the night. "What a woman!" thought he, and his horse sped like a shadow.

Sultana turned around and, by the light of the moon, looked upon Cosma.

"Why do you look upon me, lady?"

And the horse flew on, the lady's black locks streaming in the wind, and the hoar-frost shone on the autumnal leaves. Sultana stared at the man, whose mighty arms were of iron, whose eyes were of flame.

"Whither do you gaze, lady; why do you tremble? Is it the cold?" The horse's hoofs echoed in the forest, the argent leaves glittered—on they flew. Suddenly they saw shadows moving hither and thither.

"Who is there?" asked Sultana.

"Nicola, thy master, awaits us."

The lady was silent, but Cosma felt how she strained at her bonds. They burst. Her white hands flashed free; her right grasped the rein, her left grasped Cosma's neck. The horse wheeled. She threw her head upon his chest.

"Do not give me to another," she whispered.

ANONYMOUS

TURKISH

THE PRINCESS AND THE COBBLER

It was near the close of a summer's day ; the last rays of the setting sun fell like a flood of liquid gold over the town of Ghazni, gilding its domes and minarets. A cool refreshing breeze, loaded with the incense of the flowers of the surrounding country, had sprung up to refresh the weary groups of porters and water-carriers reposing, after their day's toil, near the public fountain. The call of the *muezzins* from the minarets, to assemble the faithful to prayer, had ceased ; and so great was the calm, the quiet which reigned, that one might have supposed it some enchanted city, o'er which the magician's rod had waved and brought a spell of slumber on the whole.

At the door of one of the shops of the main street sat a young man, cross-legged, as is the custom in the East, smoking his *chibook*, awaiting customers. His noble mien and majesty of countenance contrasted strangely with his humble station ; for " Said " was a shoemaker, whom, strange to say, they had thus called, as if in mockery, " The Fortunate."

The fine contour and chiselled features of his countenance, and the grace of his person, spoke more for his noble descent than would many a patent of nobility, spite of the contradictory evidence of his present condition ; for, by the sudden and violent revolution in the East, it not unfrequently happens that the peasant is as well descended as the peer.

Said, also, had the advantage of education, for his father had early sent him to the school of Ghazni, where he had learned to read and write—no slight accomplishment in the East.

On the evening, then, of which we are speaking, Said was about at last to close his shop, when he caught sight of a wandering dervish coming down the street towards his shop. The dervish approached, and, interested by his benevolent face, Said addressed him, and offered to mend a hole which he saw in the dervish's boot.

"Thanks, my son," said the dervish; "God has given thee a good heart, and, in return for your kindness, I will tell thee how to mend a rent in thy heart."

Said invited the stranger to enter, and laid supper before him, and they stayed conversing till near midnight. At last the dervish said :

"Behold, thou art called Said, but thy heart is sad, and thou art not satisfied with thy humble fortune; listen, now, and I will tell thee how to mend it. You have read the *Jabar Nama* and the *Ajarb Macklukat*, and you have longed to witness with your own eyes the wonders of foreign lands. Arise, now; to-morrow, sell thy furniture, and set out and see the world; but I counsel you, firstly, choose some trusty companions, for the Prophet has said, 'First the companion, then the road'; secondly, not to sleep in any place where water is not near: and thirdly, not to enter any city towards evening."

The next morning the dervish departed, and Said, having sold his furniture and made his preparations for the road, agreed to set out in company with a party of merchants about to leave the town.

They travelled for a considerable time without meeting with any adventure, when one evening they came to a city, and the merchants hastened to enter before the gates should be closed. Some short distance from the city Said remembered the words of the dervish, not to enter any city at the close of day, and expressed his intention of remaining behind, and not entering the city till the next morning. At first his companions endeavoured to dissuade him from his apparently absurd intention; but at last, finding all their efforts useless, they left him sitting on the bank of a stream, and hastened to the town.

The night soon fell black and dreary, and Said found himself alone with his thoughts, for not even the faintest ray of a star enlivened the scene. He arose, and, leaving the bank of the stream, approached the city. Not knowing whither he went, he came at last to the burial-place of the town, and entered, and wandered amongst the tombs for some time.

He had not been there long before the storm, which had been threatening for some hours, burst forth in all its fury. Terrific claps of thunder seemed to rend the very heavens, and flashes of forked lightning illumined the tombs, giving them a grotesque and sinister appearance. To take shelter from the storm, Said descended into one of the sepulchres, somewhat regretting now that he had followed the dervish's advice.

At last, unable to control his impatience, he quitted the tomb and came into the open air. Scarcely had he ascended, when he was amazed to see two men letting something down from the wall of

the city, which joined the burial-place. He retreated behind the tomb to escape observation, and saw the two men descend, and, taking up their burthen, carry it to the very tomb he had just left. After a short time the two men reappeared, and, passing so close as almost to touch Said, left the burial-place.

Said re-entered the tomb, and, having struck a light, saw that the load which the two men had deposited was a coffin, which lay overturned. The outside of the coffin was stained with blood, and blood seemed to be oozing from beneath it. Said stood some time transfixed with horror ; his limbs seemed about to fail him, and he turned so pale that he might himself have been taken for some wandering inhabitant of the tomb.

What was his horror when the coffin seemed to move ! He approached it, however, and, urged by curiosity, overcame his fears, and turned it upwards, removed the lid, and beheld a beautiful maiden lying in her winding-sheet, the whiteness of which contrasted strongly with the stains of blood and gore upon it. Said had no doubt that the maiden was dead, and began to remove the winding-sheet, when, to his amazement, he thought he heard a faint whisper from the dead body, saying, " Do you not fear God, that you thus uncover me ? "

Certain now that it was a living body, Said answered :

" O beautiful maiden, art thou in pain ? My heart is grieved to see thee in such a condition, and I thought thee dead."

" Canst thou help me ? " cried the maiden ; " because, if so, do it, and I will be obliged to thee. I am bleeding to death."

Said immediately took off his kaftan, or loose upper garment, and, tearing it in pieces, bound up the wounds of the maiden.

The next morning, at daybreak, Said arose, and, taking up the maiden, entered the city before there was scarcely any one astir, reached a caravanserai, and deposited his burthen in a room there, telling the keeper that she was his sister, and that they had been attacked by robbers on the road.

In a short time the maiden recovered from her wounds ; and one day, returning from the bath, whither she had been for the first time, asked Said to bring pen, ink, and paper, and wrote a note, which she gave him, telling him to go to the exchange, where he would see a certain merchant sitting, whose appearance she described, to whom he should give the note.

" Whatever he give you," said she, " take it, and bring it to me."

When Said came to the exchange, sure enough he saw a merchant sitting just in the place the maiden had said, whose appearance corresponded exactly with the description given by her of the person to whom he was to give the note.

Said accosted the merchant, saluted him, and presented

The merchant took the note, kissed it, and put it to his head, as is the custom in the East ; and, having perused it, drew forth a purse from his girdle, and gave it to Said. Said took the purse, as the maiden had directed, and returned to the caravanserai.

"Go now," said the maiden, "and buy a small house, and with what remains of the money purchase clothes for yourself and me."

Said lost no time in complying with her request, and soon the house and clothes were ready and they removed thither.

Shortly after they had settled in their new abode, the maiden again sat down to write, and, giving a letter to Said, told him to go again, and give it into the hand of the young merchant.

Said went, as before, and gave the letter to the merchant, who took it, and drew forth this time two purses and handed them to Said.

Said returned to the maiden, who said, "Go now and buy horses, clothes, and slaves, and bring them hither."

Said did as she directed, and, when all was completed, the maiden wrote another note, and gave it to Said, who went to the merchant, as before, and returned with three purses of gold.

"Now," said the maiden, "take one of these purses, and go to such a street, where you will find another merchant ; ask to see his wares, and whatever price he demand, give it him."

The young man went and did so, although quite unable to imagine what all this meant.

After a few days, the maiden gave him another of the purses of gold, and told him to go and purchase certain stuffs of the merchant, but not to hesitate, whatever price he might ask.

Said went to the merchant, demanded to see certain stuffs, and, having been shown several descriptions, purchased the most expensive, without attempting to make the merchant abate one farthing of the enormous price he asked, and paid down the money at once.

The merchant, delighted with such a customer, invited Said to come and spend the next evening with him.

Said returned to the maiden, and related what had passed.

"Go," said the maiden ; "but take care only to look straight before you, and not on either side."

The next evening Said repaired to the merchant's house, was sumptuously regaled by the merchant, and spent a most pleasant evening, carefully avoiding, however, as the maiden had counselled him, to look about him.

When he returned, he related all that had happened to the maiden, who said, "To-morrow, go and invite him to come here."

Accordingly, when the morrow came, Said repaired to the merchant's, and invited him to spend the evening with him. The

merchant replied by saying, "*Bismillah* (in the name of God), I will come."

The young man returned home, and informed the maiden. She immediately set about putting the house in order, prepared wine, fruits, and roast meats, and ordered music to be in readiness.

When evening came, the merchant failed not to keep his appointment, and he and Said remained eating and drinking till near midnight.

At last the merchant arose, and wished to take leave, but Said, whom the maiden had told not to let the merchant depart, pressed him to stay, and on his insisting to go, told him that he should not leave the house that night, but must sleep there ; at the same time he ordered cushions to be spread out, and lay down.

The merchant having no other resource, was obliged to yield, and lay down beside him.

In the middle of the night, when the merchant was sleeping soundly, the maiden entered the chamber. Awakened by the rustle of her garments as she passed, Said sat up and watched her. She drew nigh the merchant, and, leaning over him, drew forth a dagger and plunged it into his heart. With one faint groan the merchant expired, without uttering one word or cry.

The maiden turned, and seeing Said sitting up and awake, said to him, "Behold, now, it is time that I tell thee my history, for my doings must, indeed, seem strange to thee. Listen, now, O youth, and judge not before thou hast heard my tale.

"I am the daughter of the king of this city, the last of a long race of mighty sovereigns who have ruled this kingdom. The villian whom thou hast just seen me slay is the son of a butcher in this city.

"One day, in an evil hour, as I went to the bath, I was attracted by his handsome appearance, which was as fair as his heart was black and wicked, and fell in love with him. It was not long before he discovered the passion I bore for him, and letters passed between us ; and at last he visited me disguised as a girl, and not unfrequently I visited him in disguise. I furnished him with money to establish himself as a merchant, and he became, as you have seen, one of the richest in the city.

"One day I unexpectedly visited him, and, entering his apartment as usual without any announcement, what was my horror, my indignation, after all I had done for him, to see him sitting with another woman, with whom he was so engaged that it was not until I had been some minutes in the room that he was aware of my presence. I upbraided him with his ingratitude and inconstancy, and struck the woman with whom he was sitting. He said not a word, but left the apartment, returning with two men, who

immediately seized me, and, wounding me in several places, placed me in a coffin, believing me dead, and carried me out of the city, over the wall, to the cemetery, and placed me in the tomb, when God sent thee to rescue me. Arise, now; go to my father, and bring him the glad tidings of my discovery: he will not fail to reward thee richly."

On the morning after the princess had gone to her faithless lover, the king missed his daughter, and caused search to be made for her throughout the city and the neighbourhood in vain. Knowing that she must have voluntarily quitted the palace, the king made a vow that if ever he found her he would marry her to a cobbler to punish her.

When Said came to the palace, he demanded audience of the grand vizier, and imparted to him what he had to tell the king concerning his daughter. The vizier brought him before the king, who was rejoiced to hear of his daughter's safety, and sent to fetch her immediately. Having satisfied himself of her innocence, he kissed her on both eyes, and welcomed her back to the palace, and repented of the rash vow he had made to marry her to a cobbler to humble her.

After the first burst of joy, the king sat sad and as if embarrassed what to do.

The vizier inquired the cause of his grief, and on his explaining it, told him to rejoice, for it seemed that God had willed that his daughter should be married to Said, as he had been a cobbler in his native town of Ghazni.

Then the joy of the king knew no bounds, and he gave his daughter to Said, with a large dowry, and made him governor over a large province of his empire.

Thus Said became a king's son, and was rewarded for his goodness to the dervish and for following his advice.

MODERN EGYPTIAN

RETRIBUTION

(From "Tales of the Ramad'han")

A YOUTH in the city of Cairo, named Mansúr, having captured two nightingales and placed them in a wicker cage, which he suspended outside of the window, their sweet warbling one day attracted the attention of an officer of the khalif's guard who offered two or three dirhams for them, and on being told that the birds were not for sale, rose gradually in his offer to two gold dinars, for which the lad consented to part with them.

"Take the cage," said the officer, "and follow me; I am now going home, and will be your guide."

On arriving at his house, the officer knocked at the door, and taking the cage from Mansúr, stepped in, bidding him tarry a moment for the money. He waited a long time, and at last knocked, upon which a soldier came out and demanded his business. The youth told him that he had sold the officer two nightingales and waited for payment.

"You had better be contented with your loss," said the soldier, "and make the best of your way home, for you may otherwise deliver up the camel to him who had stolen the saddle."

"What is your master's name?" asked Mansúr.

"Abú Sefi," replied the soldier; "but he is more commonly known by the appellation of Ibn Shaytan" (the Son of the Devil).

"Well," said Mansúr, "were he the Devil's father, he should pay me for my birds. Tell him this from me; but add, at the same time, that I am willing to take them back if he does not consider them worth what he offered me."

"Be advised, friend," answered the soldier, "and push this business no farther. It is better to lose ten ardebs of dhourra than set fire to the granary. You know not Ibn Shaytan: he is dreaded through Cairo as a blood-drinker, whom no man can offend with impunity. There is, in fact, not a merchant in the bazár who would not prefer taking a lion by the mane to beholding the

moustachios of Ibn Shaytan stiffening, like a cat's tail, with indignation against him."

"Yet," said Mansúr, "I am determined to have my birds or the price agreed upon between us. Tell him this, and I will remain here in the meantime."

Surprised at the lad's resolute air, the soldier proceeded towards the apartment of his master, followed by Mansúr, who had slipped into the house unperceived. On hearing the importunate demands of the youth, Ibn Shaytan grew angry, or pretended to be so, and in a harsh, intimidating manner exclaimed, "Where is the unpertinent fellow? Bring him hither that I may chastise him."

"Here I am, bimbashi," said Mansúr, springing out from behind the soldier, who started at the sharp sound of his voice; "here I am, to receive two gold dinars for the nightingales you purchased of me about an hour ago."

For a moment Ibn Shaytan himself was disconcerted by the youth's intrepidity, but recovering his self-possession, told him that he chose to owe him nothing, and if he did not be off, the soles of his feet should be quickly made acquainted with the bastinado. The youth, seeing there was no remedy, left the house, resolved to revenge the injury he had suffered.

Near the residence of the officer there was a deep well, to which the young women of the neighbourhood daily resorted to draw water. Disguising himself as a girl, Mansúr proceeded one day with a neat wooden vessel in his hand towards this well, and waiting patiently until Ibn Shaytan appeared, purposely dropped his vessel into the water, and then wringing his hands, and affecting extreme grief, as if he had suffered a great loss, attracted the notice of his enemy, who, being an unprincipled man, came up and offered his services, in the hope of deriving some advantage from the gratitude of the supposed young woman.

"Ah," exclaimed Mansúr in a soft feminine voice, "I am undone! Having lost an antique carved vessel in the well, I shall be scourged to death."

The officer pretended to compassionate the young slave, and then leaned over the parapet, bent down his head, and hung so nicely that the slightest touch would have sufficed to precipitate him into the well. Drawing near on tiptoe, Mansúr caught him by the feet, and bidding him remember the widow's son whom he had so cruelly wronged, hurled him down headlong, and immediately making his escape, removed with his mother to another quarter of the city. Contrary to all probability, Ibn Shaytan, though much bruised and lacerated, was not killed by the fall; and, the water being shallow, likewise escaped drowning. After long shouting in vain, he at length heard the voices of women above, and his heart began to

entertain hopes of effecting his escape ; so mustering all his strength, he vociferated as loud as he could, and entreated them to draw him up. Hearing an indistinct and broken murmur arising out of the bowels of the earth, the women started back with terror, imagining they had arrived by mistake at the mouth of Jehennam, and that the father of devils, with a legion at his back, would presently be amongst them. Observing, however, that the voice, to whatever it might belong, still continued at a respectful depth, one of the women, more adventurous than the rest, plucking up her courage and approaching the well, inquired in the name of Allah whether it was Shaytan or the son of Shaytan who made so fearful a clamour below. Abú Sefi, supposing she alluded to the sobriquet he had acquired, and not caring by what name they called him, provided he could effect his escape, replied that he was Ibn Shaytan (the Devil's son), begging, at the same time, that they would lower the bucket and draw him up.

"God forbid!" exclaimed the woman; "we have devils enough on earth already. If the Prophet, therefore, hath condemned thee to cool thyself in this situation, remain where thou art until the day of judgment. The water, however, can be none of the most savoury where so foul an imp is confined; and for this reason we must warn our neighbours no more to draw from this well—curses light on thee!"

It was in vain that the officer, perceiving the blunder he had committed, sought to convince her that he had not the honour of belonging to the family of Iblís, and was a simple officer of the khalif's guards. The only answer he obtained was a large stone, which, being thrown at random, fortunately missed him; after which all the women took to their heels, looking back apprehensively over their shoulders to see whether the fiend was following them. The news of Ibn Shaytan's being in the well quickly spread; and at length some Arabs, more acute than the rest, proceeded to investigate the mystery, on the clearing up of which Abú Sefi was released from his uncomfortable situation and carried home more dead than alive.

Mansúr, who thought he had killed him outright, was greatly vexed on learning of his escape, and at once began to cast about him for some means of completing the work he had commenced; being convinced that should Ibn Shaytan recover, he would leave no stone unturned to avenge himself on his youthful enemy. For the present, however, there was little danger. The officer, though attended by many doctors, lay groaning on his couch, suffering the most excruciating pains, and unable to enjoy a moment's sleep night or day. Nevertheless, instead of regarding the present affliction as the just chastisement of Heaven and learning mercy from the lessons of calamity, he only grew more implacable; his sole consolation being

derived from the projects of revenge which his imagination was employed in devising.

One morning, as he lay awake on his couch anticipating the satisfaction he should derive from hanging Mansúr upon his mother's door-post a soldier entered the apartment to inform him that a remarkable little hunchbacked physician, with a long white beard, was at that moment passing by, inviting all persons who were suffering from any disorder to have recourse to his art, and he would heal them. Persons in Ibn Shaytan's situation are always open to delusion. Conceiving a sudden confidence in the unknown doctor chiefly on account of the deformity of his person—as if Heaven must necessarily disguise wisdom and genius in an uncouth exterior—he ordered him to be called in, and even before he appeared, began to amuse himself with hopes of the most flattering kind.

Presently the physician, preceded by the soldier, entered, and, drawing near the patient's bed, inquired in a cheerful voice the nature of his case. Ibn Shaytan related what had befallen him, dwelling particularly on the frightful dreams which disturbed the short imperfect slumbers procured by *datura*; at which the doctor smiled, and when he had made an end replied that if he would place himself entirely under his care, and take without reluctance whatever medicines he should prescribe, he might reasonably expect a speedy recovery. Greatly rejoiced at these consolatory expressions, Ibn Shaytan promised to do whatever was enjoined him; and so complete was the confidence inspired by the hunchbacked doctor that even before any medicines had been administered much of the cure appeared to be already effected.

Having thus enlisted the imagination of the patient on his side, the doctor despatched his attendants in different directions for various medicines; and when they were all out of doors, approaching the bed with flashing eyes, he said:

“Ibn Shaytan, I have with me two potions, both very bitter, but productive of very different effects. Thou sayest that Mansúr, the son of Esmé, is thine enemy, and even now, while on the brink of the grave, the rancour of revenge curdles round thy heart. Know, however, that the unforgiving are abandoned by Allah, and that, while their souls are thus diseased, no mortal mixture can heal their bodies. Forgive, therefore, and it shall be well with thee. Say thou wilt not prosecute thy feud with the young man, and I will answer for thy recovery. The first potion I offer thee is Repentance. Wilt thou drink it?”

“Nay, hakim,” replied the patient, alarmed at the manner or the old man, but resolved not to listen to his advice; “nay, presume not beyond thy art. I will never forgive him, by Allah! or cease to pursue my just revenge until both he and the beldam who bore

him shall be trampled beneath my feet. Indeed, it is chiefly this consideration that renders me desirous of life."

"Slave! dog! infidel!" exclaimed Mansúr, tearing off his disguise and seizing him by the throat—"hadst thou been capable of mercy, I would have spared thee; but since thy savage revenge meditates not only my destruction, but also that of my parent, who never injured thee or thine, take the second potion I have provided for thee!"

So saying, he smote him with a dagger in the breast, and, having slain him, made his escape from the house.

PERSIAN

ANONYMOUS

THE FIRST IMPULSE

TOORIRI was a rich citizen of Bagdad, highly renowned everywhere for his virtues. He not only assisted the poor to such an extent as to reduce the possibility of living in greatest luxury to simple comfort, but he listened with the most enduring politeness to the complaints of all sufferers who came to him, comforted them with cheerful words, and helped them in all possible ways.

He endured with resignation the thousand and one petty miseries which form the greater part of human life. He was very tolerant, and it never irritated him that people were not all of the same opinion as he—a difficult and rare virtue, for the secret desire of each man's heart is that all the rest of humanity shall be inferior, and at the same time similar to him.

Married to a shrew, he remained faithful to her, forgave all her bad temper, and never made her feel that she was neither young nor pretty. Being a writer and a poet, he rejoiced in the success of his rivals, and in courteous and sincere expressions manifested his goodwill and friendship.

In a word, his whole life was all charity, sweetness, loyalty, disinterestedness, and he was considered a saint and a gentleman at the same time.

His face, however, lacked the serenity which is generally an attribute of a saint's features. It was lined like that of a man swayed by violent passions or gnawed by hidden anguish. He was often seen to stop and lower his eyes, in order to collect himself or to prevent people from reading his thoughts. But nobody paid any attention to this.

There lived not far from Bagdad a hermit named Maitreya, a great miracle-worker, to whose seat many pilgrims used to come for worship. Maitreya observed such immobility, having placed himself above the conditions of ordinary humanity, that swallows had come and built nests on his shoulders. His beard, as foul as the tails of the sacred cows, came down to his very belt, and his body looked like the rugged trunk of a tree. He lived thus for some ninety years, for such was his ideal.

One day he heard a pilgrim say :

"Tooriri seems to be an incarnation of Ormuzd, he is so good. Surely all suffering would be eliminated from the surface of the earth if such a man could do all he wanted."

Maitreya's immobility grew still more rigid. It was evident that the holy man entered into direct communication with Ormuzd himself. After several moments of thought he said to the pilgrim :

"I cannot obtain from Ormuzd that Tooriri be given the power of achieving all his desires, for then he would become a god. But Ormuzd, in his kindness, allows that the first impulse of that sainted man in all circumstances of his life shall be realised, beginning with to-morrow."

"That is almost the same thing !" said the pilgrim. "Tooriri's first impulse will be, like all his other desires, charitable and generous. Venerable Maitreya, you have announced to me a fact which will cause the happiness of many a man, and I give you thanks."

If Maitreya's beard had been less impenetrable the pilgrim might have seen the shadow of a smile on his stony lips. But almost immediately the hermit fell again to dreaming his everlasting reveries.

The pilgrim went back to the city, rejoicing in advance at the many charitable actions by which the power of the wise Tooriri should manifest itself on the morrow.

Next morning Tooriri awoke before his wife and looked at her for a moment ; moved by a mysterious power, she rose suddenly, walked to the window, jumped over the sill, and broke her head on the stones of the pavement.

On leaving his house he was accosted by a crowd of beggars asking for alms. He said no hard words to them, and his hand went of itself to his pocket ; but ere it had reached it all the beggars fell suddenly dead at his feet.

Farther on he met the beautiful Mandaniki, and he—the wise, the virtuous Tooriri—bowed to her and followed her to her house. There, while she was telling him the story of her life, she expired in his arms as he was holding her tenderly against his heart.

Upon leaving Mandaniki's abode he was stopped at a cross-road by a number of vehicles which had got jammed, and he began to lose patience. Then all the coachmen fell off their seats and all the horses had their sinews cut as if by an invisible scythe.

In the evening he went to the theatre, and began a dispute there with the learned Sarvilaka over a verse which the latter attributed to Nisami and which Tooriri believed had been written by Saadi, the poet of the Roses. Suddenly the learned man fell back in his

seat and vomited a flood of black blood. The comedy played that night was very successful, and the actors were rewarded by unanimous applause. However, a few minutes before Tooriri had decided to join in this recognition of the playwright's merit, the author in quite an unexpected manner gave his soul up to his Maker.

Tooriri came home horrified at this wholesale massacre, and in despair at not being able to understand how it all came to pass, killed himself with a dagger, thrusting it into his heart.

The holy hermit Maitreya died likewise on that same night.

Both appeared at the same time before the wise Ormuzd. The hermit was thinking :

" I shall not be displeased to see adequate punishment meted out to this false saint, whose virtue was so long the admiration of the befooled Persians, but who in one day, when it was given to him to show himself such as he was, covered himself with innumerable sins and crimes."

But the wise Ormuzd said :

" Virtuous Tooriri, truly good and kind man, my faithful and loyal servant, enter into everlasting peace."

" This is surely a very amusing joke ! " said the hermit.

" I have never been more serious in my life," answered Ormuzd. " Tooriri, thou hast desired the annihilation of thy wife because she was not kind and because she was no longer beautiful ; thou hast wished the death of the beggars because they were importuning thee and were of a hideous aspect ; that of thy mistress because she was a fool ; the demise of the coachmen and the destruction of the horses because they forced thee to wait when thou wast in a hurry ; thou hast desired the death of the scholar Sarvilaka because he was of a different opinion from thine, and that of the author of the comedy because he had greater success than thyself. All these desires were perfectly natural. The murders which Maitreya is reproaching thee with were, without thy knowledge, an effect of thy first impulse, the first impulse and desire which none can control. A man inevitably hates what hampers him and as inevitably he desires the annihilation of what he hates. Nature is selfish, and the name of selfishness is destruction. The most virtuous man begins by being a scoundrel in his heart, and were it given to him to realise his first impulsive and involuntary desire, the earth would soon be a desert without any human beings on it. This, Tooriri, is what I wanted to show by thy example. Man is judged by his second desire, for this depends on his will. Without the mysterious gift which rendered thy supreme day such a murderous one in spite of thyself, thy life would have continued to be a virtuous and a charitable one. It is not nature that I must consider in thee, but thy will, which was ever for the good and which always applied itself to correct nature

and perfect my imperfect work. And this is why, beloved collaborator, I open wide to-day to thee the portals of my paradise."

"That is fine!" said Maitreya. "What are you going to do for me in that case? What recompense is in store for me?"

"The same," replied Ormuzd, "although thou hast but imperfectly earned it. Thou wast a saint, but thou wast no more a man in anything, unless it be thy pride. Thou hast achieved the suppression of the first impulse; but if all men lived like thee, humanity would be swept off the face of the earth even more quickly than if every one had the marvellous but fatal power with which I afflicted, for one day, my faithful servant here. It suits me that humanity should last, because it amuses me and because the spectacle it offers is sometimes sublime. Thy effort, miserable ascetic, was not absolutely devoid of beauty of a certain kind, and I forgive thee thy harsh error. In conclusion, to Tooriri I open the gates of paradise and receive him in my bosom, because I am just; to thee, Maitreya, I give permission to enter because I am kind."

"But—" said Maitreya.

Ormuzd raised his stern visage. "I have spoken."

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THE AMERICAN STORY-TELLERS

From Washington Irving to Everett Hale

As the United States of America are a continent in themselves, it is not remarkable that their arts should at times show a diversity as wide as that of Europe. Between the life of the American mechanic in New England and the life of a cowboy on the Mexican border there is as much difference as obtains between the ways of existence of a Cossack of the Don and those of a puddler in a foundry at Liège.

When the American spirit in the first half of the nineteenth century began to manifest its special qualities in literature, some extraordinary extremes were at once observed. The common language scarcely masked the opposite varieties of civilisation that it connected. The highest kind of culture was linked to the most primitive sort of popular expression. Between the art of the Bostonian and the art of the backwoodsman there was an intellectual chasm that the common nationality did not bridge.

In New England and in Virginia a school of writers arose with a delicacy, exquisiteness, and subtlety, in both conception and manner, which were a supreme refinement upon the finest traditions of European fiction. But at the same time the more western States, in which the pioneer work of settlement was going on, produced another school of story-tellers who neglected all the literary achievements of the Old World, and, with roughly effective methods, cast into popular form the crude, vigorous, roaring life around them.

Neither of these schools can be measured against the other. In our time they have culminated in the work of Henry James on the one hand,

and the work of Mark Twain on the other. The work of Henry James is the fine flower of Bostonianism : based entirely on European culture, it excels the subtlest French art, and influences the methods of men so wide apart as Paul Bourget and Joseph Conrad. The work of Mark Twain is purely native in matter and manner, wonderfully fresh at its best, with a new beauty of diction and vision that captivated Rudyard Kipling, among others, and made him more American than English in style and outlook.

In the present volume we are able to trace the origin and development of these two powerful movements in American literature. Into their short stories American writers have poured their fullest genius. American poetry, American drama, and, to some extent, the American long novel have been of secondary importance to the people of the country in which they were produced. In these departments of literature both British and French contributed, during the larger part of the nineteenth century, some of the chief elements of modern American culture. Only in the art of the short story has the American mind displayed an originality and creativeness of a dominating quality. It has surpassed even the French mind in the intellectual energy with which it has studied all the possibilities of the last new literary form, and it has composed a glorious number of little masterpieces of fiction with manifold excellences.

WASHINGTON IRVING

Of these masterpieces, Washington Irving's "Rip van Winkle" is the first in date and far from the last in merit. Published in 1819, this delicate, humorous, picturesque, eerie tale is the earliest attempt in America at local fiction and also the most successful. The legend seems to be of German origin—a piece of folk-lore picked up by Irving in his European travels in 1815. But the German popular tradition was merely a rough marble boulder that Irving carved into an immortal work of art. Resetting the legend in his native Kaatskill Mountains, Irving infused into it all the charm, quaintness, and romance to which it owes its fame.

Washington Irving, with his graceful eighteenth-century style and Addisonian point of view, was one of those delicate, critical minds that need a base to build on. He had not the large, originating energy of imagination which can create something out of nothing. But when some poor material was given to him, he could reshape it in a personal and delightful way. "The Spectre Bridegroom" is an admirable

example of his graceful talent for rehandling old subjects, for touching nothing that he did not adorn. The story is clearly based upon a legend of the Rhine; but the crude Teutonic gruesomeness is refined away by the American writer in a happy turn of native humour.

JUDGE LONGSTREET

In Irving's contemporary, Judge Longstreet, this kind of native humour finds expression in a rougher, livelier way in *The Horse-Swap*—one of the first purely American yarns of the lighter sort. Longstreet, born in the eighteenth century, was a long-lived, versatile man, who saw the rise of modern America after the Civil War. He began as a lawyer in Georgia, quickly won a judgeship, tired of judicial work and turned Methodist preacher, and ended as a College President. From his early "Georgia Scenes" are taken the two amusing sketches we publish.

SOLOMON SMITH

Good as his work is, and historic as is its importance, it is surpassed by that of Solomon Smith, a native New Yorker, who gave to low comedy much of what he owed to literature. Smith wandered about the American continent for fifty years as a touring comedian and theatre manager. His tale of Mississippi life in 1827, entitled "Wooding Up," shows us where Mark Twain, long afterwards, learnt his art. In subject-matter and treatment it is a little masterpiece of humour. In his happiest mood, Smith stands comparison with any later writer of the school that he originated. Even in his low comedy vein, as in "Jenks's Whiskers," he is irresistibly funny. I acclaim him the father of all good American humorists, for he was born in New York county in 1801.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Three years afterwards, the early Puritan stock, spread along the Atlantic coast, north of the Dutch settlement at New York, produced, like a hard, granite rock with a perfect flower in one of its crannies, a literary artist of the finest and most delicate genius—Nathaniel Hawthorne. Hawthorne is the American miracle. It is easy to explain some of the elements of his mind, such as his strong bent towards an allegorical interpretation of the forces of life, as displayed in "The Birthmark" and "The Great Stone Face" and "The Celestial

Railroad." It is due to the deep mark made on the Puritan imagination by the perfect art of John Bunyan. "The Pilgrim's Progress" had probably more shaping influence over Hawthorne's genius than over that of any other writer.

The quality of Hawthorne's imaginative power, however, was curiously distinct. He was strangely detached from the American life of his time. Living poor, solitary, and disregarded in the old witch-burning town of Salem, he devoted himself with quiet, intense passion to the cult of beautiful things. All his natural traditions of Puritanism were, to him, only the material for art, to be studied from the poetic and æsthetic point of view. It was his revenge upon the earnest, narrow minds around him.

In a way, his art was the iridescence of the decay of the Puritanic rule of life. The old problems of sin, remorse, and regeneration interested him as throwing a romantic light on the artistic study of the workings of the human mind. He ground the Puritan conscience into strange, deep pigments for the production of pictures of life with a curious, new beauty. "The Great Stone Face," however, shows the natural sanity and largeness of outlook he retained. In losing his early faith he did not suffer moral shipwreck. There is something in him that reminds one of R. L. Stevenson, who, indeed, was at one time a disciple of his.

"Young Goodman Brown" is an admirable example of Hawthorne's art of the *macabre*. Quietly and with a charming fancifulness, he arrives by delicate gradations at the mysterious horror of a witches' Sabbath. He does not quite believe in it himself, but he relishes the thrill of it. In his next story, however, he is deeply in earnest. "Ethan Brand," the man who went in search of the Unpardonable Sin, is a study of his own heart in a mood of bitter self-analysis. The "cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, converting man and woman to be his puppets," is Nathaniel Hawthorne, the novelist, sick of studying human beings as the material of his art, instead of living in sympathetic community of feeling with them.

¶ In "Doctor Heidegger's Experiment," an ironic fantasy on the virtues of old age, and in "Edward Randolph's Portrait," a little ghostly historical romance, it is again his grace and charm and exquisiteness of manner that prevail. He is only half-sincere and seriously playful. But in "The Ambitious Guest," Hawthorne looks into his own heart once more. It is then he makes us shudder. His own secret troubles were very remote from those of ordinary life. A man of a fine, solitary intellect, with an imagination feeding on itself

in the dearth of nourishment in the scenes around it, Hawthorne felt strange temptations, and it is some measure of his genius that men like Goethe, Browning and Tennyson underwent the same ordeal.

N. P. WILLIS

With N. P. Willis, in "Two Buckets in a Well," we descend from these lonely and perilous heights of the soul to the Latin Quarter in Paris. It is such a story as Thackeray might have included in his "Paris Sketch-Book," this sprightly, careless narrative of the money-loving girl who spoilt a handsome young artist and turned his genius into a fashionable talent. Willis himself was a man with a small, fine turn for literature, which he adulterated into journalistic successes. In rare happy moments he wrote a few tales and poems to show what he might have done if he had not bartered his soul too readily in the market-place.

C. F. HOFFMAN

Far more interesting is the personality of C. F. Hoffman, a native of New York, who occupied some important positions on the American periodical press between 1830 and 1849. His eerie, original tales, "The Man in the Reservoir" and "Ben Blower's Story," have a nightmarish intensity that reminds one of Poe. With Hoffman this uncanniness and fearfulness were no calculated effects. The man himself was tortured by such ideas, and at last his mind gave way under them.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Edgar Allan Poe, the supreme master of the shudder, had more control over his wild, grisly fancies. His powerful imagination was balanced by a strong force of intellect. It was this unusual poise of high qualities that made him so incomparable an artist. He is the grand exemplar of the art of the short story, and probably the most illustrious name in American literature. For, by reasoning out everything he did, he taught even more by his example than he did by his achievements.

Men of wider genius than his have used the short story in a magnificent way. Boccaccio, Balzac, and Maupassant, in his last period, showed a larger sense of life. And in our own day, Mr. Rudyard Kipling has

displayed a range and a depth of view which are quite extraordinary. Nevertheless, Poe in his own field is more important than all of them.

He found the brief modern prose tale developing in a very haphazard manner. Coming to it after a severe apprenticeship in the strict and complex art of poetry, he thought out the form of the short story with as powerful an application of the intellect as Petrarch worked out the laws of the sonnet. His "Purloined Letter" is an admirable essay in philosophy as well as the most famous and suggestive of detective tales. It may seem to have nothing in common with the wild, sombre, romantic prose poem, "The Fall of the House of Usher." But in matter of fact, the keen, logical side of Poe's mind is as active in the second tale as it is in the first. It controls the use of every word he employs to create the weird, unearthly atmosphere of the finest of his stories. His own strange, disastrous life was his inspiration for this masterpiece of narrative art; but when he came to the work of composition he obtained his proposed effects by lucid means.

In inferior hands his tales of sensation, "The Pit and the Pendulum," "The Black Cat," "The Masque of the Red Death," and particularly "The Cask of Amontillado," would have been merely violent, brutal attacks upon the reader's nerves. The violence of some of them is indeed ferocious. But the pure beauty of the form makes them at the same time a delight to the intelligence. The discerning, critical reader is so charmed by the art with which the horror is revealed, that the combined effect is one of curious pleasure.

"William Wilson," a strange, poetic allegory of Poe's own double life of proud, undimmed genius and vacillating wretched meebriety, is remarkable for its intrinsic worth and its influence on other writers. It may have helped Stevenson to produce "Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and in combination with Poe's next tale, "The Oval Portrait," it certainly suggested the main ideas in "The Portrait of Dorian Grey." There was an exquisite and noble element in the character of Poe that unconsciously finds expression in the sad story of the death of his young wife, "The Oval Portrait." He was working to glorify her and make her happy, and yet he accuses himself of being absorbed in his work during her long illness, when he was trying to earn money for her.

The nervous strain he underwent in this racking, wearing time gave rise to that symptom of disease which he transmutes into the material of his art in "The Tell-Tale Heart." Then, in the lovely study of spiritual passion, "Eleonora," he strangely evokes his memories of his young dead wife at the moment when he had fallen again in love—with a living woman. There is only one defect in Poe's works.

Everything about them is as finished as a thing of man's making can be, except at times the diction. Poe's sense of verbal beauty was somewhat uncertain. Some of his words mar the page in which they are used in the same way as a plush ornament would mar a finely ordered room of noble proportions. But Poe could in both prose and poetry avoid even this lapse from perfection. His wonderful "Shadow—a Parable" is equal to the finest passages in De Quincey.

As a writer of short stories, Poe excels Hawthorne. Hawthorne usually let only his fancy play about his subject-matter. Poe wrote with a terribly intensity of imagination. It was not ink he used, but his heart's blood. When he died, contemned and defamed in his own country, leaving his work to await full recognition by Baudelaire and other Frenchmen of genius, there followed in America a period of decline in imaginative prose literature. There was then no large field of fine, discriminating general taste in which the achievements and examples of Poe and Hawthorne could seed and flower.

MRS. H. B. STOWE

Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe became the most popular and effective of American novelists. She made herself look greater than she really was by grappling with the problem of slavery in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Her slight, true natural talent is displayed without pretension in the simple, happy comedy of "The Minister's Wooing," which from the literary point of view is certainly the best thing she ever did.

A GROUP OF HUMORISTS

The keen American sense of the rough fun of life inspires nearly all the concluding tales in the present volume. With C. P. Cranch's "A Musical Enigma" and Judge Baldwin's "Ovid Bolus, Esq.," we are back again in the world of the pioneer, amid the towns and villages of log-built houses on the edge of the newly-settled country. General Thorpe in his "'Hoosier' in Search of Justice" has produced the first historic sketch of the Western flat boatman, and J. T. Fields, a Boston publisher with a quiet, telling way of writing, gives in "The Pettibone Lineage" an ironic little study of New England snobbery. F. S. Cozzens' "Family Horse," the work of a brilliant New York wine-merchant who wrote for amusement, is a happy variation on the perennial American theme of horse-dealing.

LUCRETIA P. HALE—R. M. JOHNSTON

Many of the serious literary persons in America condemned the native popular form of narrative wit, while enjoying it. Probably the prim, pious Boston lady, Miss Lucretia P. Hale, would have been shocked to find herself ranked between Cozzens, the jovial wine-merchant, and R. M. Johnston, the Georgian humorist. Miss Hale was the sister of a clergyman, and she wrote chiefly for children, but she flowers into a happy idea in "The Spider's Eye," and so wins a position next to Johnston, whose "Billy Moon" is the strangest and most entertaining of wrestling stores. Here is the real, effective American—the exuberant, alert, fighting Anglo-Saxon, unshackled from everything in civilisation likely to hinder his swift, masterful advance across a new continent. The joyous savagery of the fellow is just an expression of his vitality.

EDWARD EVERETT HALE

Miss Hale's reverend brother, Edward Everett Hale, a famous Unitarian minister, had a strong sense of fun, as he shows in his "My Double and how he Undid Me." But his masterpiece is his first tale, "The Man Without a Country." This Defoe-like bit of verisimilitude is one of the classics of the American short story. There is no historic foundation for the idea on which it is based. That is the amazing art of it.

E. W.

WASHINGTON IRVING

1783-1859

RIP VAN WINKLE

WHOEVER has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill Mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains; and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but sometimes, when the rest of the landscape is cloudless, they will gather a hood of grey vapours about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village of great antiquity, having been founded by one of the Dutch colonists, in the early times of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant (may he rest in peace!). and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a few years, built of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, having latticed windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weather-cocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather-beaten), there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple, good-natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial character of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple, good-natured man; he was moreover a kind

neighbour, and an obedient henpecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity ; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation, and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife may, therefore, in some respects, be considered a tolerable blessing ; and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

Certain it is that he was a great favourite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles, and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity ; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighbourhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labour. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance ; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder, for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbour even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone fences. The women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them ; in a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own ; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm ; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country ; everything about it went wrong, and would go wrong in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces ; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages ; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else ; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some outdoor work to do ; so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his

management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst conditioned farm in the neighbourhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits with the old clothes of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galligaskins, which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away, in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness, his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family.

Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife, so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house—the only side which, in truth, belongs to a henpecked husband.

Rip's sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much henpecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master's going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honourable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods—but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house, his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle, he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle, as years of matrimony rolled on: a tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edge-tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village, which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of His Majesty George the Third. Here they used to sit

in the shade, of a long lazy summer's day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman's money to have heard the profound discussions which sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands, from some passing traveller. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, a dapper learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junta were completely controlled by Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun, and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbours could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true, he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When anything that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent, and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds, and sometimes taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapour curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage, and call the members all to naught; nor was that august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair, and his only alternative to escape from the labour of the farm and the clamour of his wife was to take gun in hand, and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathised as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. "Poor Wolf," he would say, "thy mistress leads thee a dog's life of it; but never mind, my lad, while I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!" Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master's face, and if dogs can feel pity, I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

In a long ramble of the kind, on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill Mountains. He was after his favourite sport of squirrel-shooting,

and the still solitudes had echoed and re-echoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees, he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene; evening was gradually advancing; the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys; he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village; and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend he heard a voice from a distance hallooing, "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!" He looked around, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry ring through the still evening air "Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!"—at the same time Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a low growl, skulked to his master's side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him: he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place, but supposing it to be some one of the neighbourhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach, he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger's appearance. He was a short square-built old fellow, with thick bushy hair, and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion—a cloth jerkin strapped round the waist—several pairs of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides, and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulders a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity, and mutually relieving each other, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long rolling peals, like distant thunder, that seemed to issue

out of a deep ravine or rather cleft between lofty rocks, toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for an instant, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thunder-showers which often take place in mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky, and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time, Rip and his companion had laboured on in silence; for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

On entering the amphitheatre new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the centre was a company of odd-looking personages playing at nine-pins. They were dressed in a quaint outlandish fashion: some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches, of similar style with that of the guide's. Their visages, too, were peculiar: one had a large head, broad face, and small piggyish eyes; the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugar-loaf hat, set off with a little red cock's tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colours. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weather-beaten countenance; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger, high-crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting, in the parlour of Dominie Van Schaick, the village parson, and which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such a fixed statue-like gaze, and such strange, uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling; they quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

By degrees, Rip's awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him, to taste the beverage, which he found had much of the flavour of excellent Hollands. He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another, and he reiterated his visits to the flagon so often that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll from whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes—it was a bright sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. "Surely," thought Rip, "I have not slept here all night." He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with the keg of liquor—the mountain ravine—the wild retreat among the rocks—the wobegone party at nine-pins—the flagon—"Oh, that wicked flagon!" thought Rip—"what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle?"

He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean well-oiled fowling-piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel incrustured with rust, the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roisterers of the mountain had put a trick upon him, and having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him, and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening's gambol, and if he met with any of the party to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk, he found himself stiff in the joints and wanting in his usual activity. "These mountain beds do not agree with me," thought Rip, "and if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle." With some difficulty he got down into the glen; he found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding evening; but to his astonishment a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel; and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grape vines that twisted their coils and tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the amphitheatre; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high impenetrable wall, over which the

torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam, and fell into a broad, deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog; he was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice; and who, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man's perplexities. What was to be done? The morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun; he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion from that to which he was accustomed. They all stared at him with equal marks of surprise, and whenever they cast eyes upon him, invariably stroked their chins. The constant recurrence of this gesture induced Rip, involuntarily, to do the same, when, to his astonishment, he found his beard had grown a foot long!

He had now entered the skirts of the village. A troop of strange children ran at his heels, hooting after him, and pointing at his grey beard. The dogs, too, not one of which he recognised for an old acquaintance, barked at him as he passed. The very village was altered: it was larger and more populous. There were rows of houses which he had never seen before, and those which had been his familiar haunts had disappeared. Strange names were over the doors—strange faces at the windows—everything was strange. His mind now misgave him; he began to doubt whether both he and the world around him were not bewitched. Surely this was his native village, which he had left but a day before. There stood the Kaatskill Mountains—there ran the silver Hudson at a distance—there was every hill and dale precisely as it had always been—Rip was sorely perplexed—"That flagon last night," thought he, "has addled my poor head sadly!"

It was with some difficulty that he found the way to his own house, which he approached with silent awe, expecting every moment to hear the shrill voice of Dame Van Winkle. He found the house gone to decay—the roof fallen in, the windows shattered, and the doors off the hinges. A half-starved dog, that looked like Wolf, was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth, and passed on. This was an unkind cut indeed. "My very dog," sighed poor Rip, "has forgotten me!"

He entered the house, which, to tell the truth, Dame Van Winkle had always kept in neat order. It was empty, forlorn, and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame all his connubial fears—he called loudly for his wife and children—the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn—but it too was gone. A large rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken, and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, "The Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle." Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there now was reared a tall naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red night-cap, and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes—all this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognised on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe, but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters GENERAL WASHINGTON.

There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair, long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco smoke, instead of idle speeches; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean bilious-looking fellow, with his pockets full of handbills, was haranguing vehemently about rights of citizens—election—members of Congress—liberty—Bunker Hill—heroes of seventy-six—and other words, that were a perfect Babylonish jargon to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long, grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and the army of women and children that had gathered at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern politicians. They crowded round him, eyeing him from head to foot, with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and drawing him partly aside, inquired "on which side he voted?" Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear, "whether he was Federal or Democrat." Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question; when a knowing, self-important old gentleman, in a sharp cocked hat, made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he

passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm a-kimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded in an austere tone "what brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?"

"Alas! gentlemen," cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, "I am a poor, quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the King, God bless him!"

Here a general shout burst forth from the bystanders:

"A Tory! Tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!"

It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order; and having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit what he came there for and whom he was seeking. The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbours, who used to keep about the tavern.

"Well—who are they?—name them."

Rip bethought himself a moment and inquired, "Where's Nicholas Vedder?"

There was silence for a little while, when an old man replied, in a thin, piping voice, "Nicholas Vedder? why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the churchyard that used to tell all about him, but that's rotten and gone too."

"Where's Brom Dutcher?"

"Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war; some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point—others say he was drowned in the squall, at the foot of Anthony's Nose. I don't know—he never came back again."

"Where's Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?"

"He went off to the wars too; was a great militia general, and is now in Congress."

Rip's heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him, too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand: war—Congress—Stony Point!—he had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, "Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?"

"Oh, Rip Van Winkle!" exclaimed two or three. "Oh to be sure! that's Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree."

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself as he went up the mountain; apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst

of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name ?

"God knows," exclaimed he at his wits' end ; "I'm not myself—I'm somebody else—that's me yonder—no—that's somebody else, got into my shoes—I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they've changed my gun, and everything's changed, and I'm changed, and I can't tell what's my name, or who I am !"

The bystanders began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief ; at the very suggestion of which the self-important man with the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh, comely woman passed through the throng to get a peep at the grey-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. "Hush, Rip," cried she, "hush, you little fool ; the old man won't hurt you." The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind.

"What is your name, my good woman ?" asked he.

"Judith Gardenier."

"And your father's name ?"

"Ah, poor man, his name was Rip Van Winkle ; it's twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been heard of since—his dog came home without him ; but whether he shot himself, or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl."

Rip had but one question more to ask ; but he put it with a faltering voice :

"Where's your mother ?"

Oh, she too had died but a short time since : she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New England pedlar.

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. "I am your father !" cried he—"Young Rip Van Winkle once—old Rip Van Winkle now !—Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle ?"

All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, "Sure enough ! it is Rip Van Winkle—it is himself. Welcome home again, old neighbour ! Why, where have you been these twenty long years ?"

Rip's story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbours stared when they heard it ; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their

cheeks ; and the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head—upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk, who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighbourhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor, the historian, that the Kaatskill Mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it was affirmed that the great Hendrik Hudson, the first discoverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the *Half-moon*, being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river and the great city called by his name. That his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses playing at nine-pins in a hollow of the mountain ; and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls, like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up, and returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip's daughter took him home to live with her ; she had a snug, well-furnished house, and a stout, cheery farmer for a husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip's son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm ; but evinced a hereditary disposition to attend to anything else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits ; he soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time ; and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favour.

Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can do nothing with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench, at the inn door, and was revered as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times "before the war." It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war—that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England—and that, instead of being a subject of His Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United

States. Rip, in fact, was no politician ; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him ; but there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was—petticoat government. Happily, that was at an end ; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, however, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes ; which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

He used to tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle's hotel. He was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was doubtless owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighbourhood but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day, they never hear a thunderstorm of a summer afternoon about the Kaatskill but they say Hendrik Hudson and his crew are at their game of nine-pins ; and it is a common wish of all hen-pecked husbands in the neighbourhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle's flagon.

WASHINGTON IRVING

THE SPECTRE BRIDEGROOM

ON the summit of one of the heights of the Odenwald, a wild and romantic tract of Upper Germany that lies not far from the confluence of the Maine and the Rhine, there stood, many, many years since, the castle of the Baron Von Landshort. It is now quite fallen to decay, and almost buried among beech-trees and dark firs ; above which, however, its old watch-tower may still be seen struggling, like the former possessor I have mentioned, to carry a high head, and look down upon the neighbouring country.

The baron was a dry branch of the great family of Katzenellenbogen, and inherited the reliques of the property, and all the pride of his ancestors. Though the warlike disposition of his predecessors had much impaired the family possessions, yet the baron still endeavoured to keep up some show of former state. The times were peaceable, and the German nobles, in general, had abandoned their inconvenient old castles, perched like eagles' nests among the mountains, and had built more convenient residences in the valleys : still the baron remained proudly drawn up in his little fortress, cherishing, with hereditary inveteracy, all the old family feuds ; so that he was on ill terms with some of his nearest neighbours, on account of disputes that had happened between their great-grandfathers.

The baron had but one child, a daughter ; but Nature, when she grants but one child, always compensates by making it a prodigy ; and so it was with the daughter of the baron. All the nurses, gossips, and country cousins assured her father that she had not her equal for beauty in all Germany ; and who should know better than they ? She had, moreover, been brought up with great care under the superintendence of two maiden aunts, who had spent some years of their early life at one of the little German courts, and were skilled in all the branches of knowledge necessary to the education of a fine lady. Under their instructions she became a miracle of accomplishments. By the time she was eighteen she could embroider to admiration, and had worked whole histories of

the saints in tapestry, with such strength of expression in their countenances, that they looked like so many souls in purgatory. She could read without great difficulty, and had spelled her way through several church legends, and almost all the chivalric wonders of the Heldenbuch. She had even made considerable proficiency in writing; could sign her own name without missing a letter, and so legibly that her aunts could read it without spectacles. She excelled in making little elegant good-for-nothing lady-like nick-nacks of all kinds; was versed in the most abstruse dancing of the day; played a number of airs on the harp and guitar; and knew all the tender ballads of the Minnelieders by heart.

At the time of which my story treats, there was a great family gathering at the castle, on an affair of the utmost importance. It was to receive the destined bridegroom of the baron's daughter. A negotiation had been carried on between the father and an old nobleman of Bavaria, to unite the dignity of their houses by the marriage of their children. The preliminaries had been conducted with proper punctilio. The young people were betrothed without seeing each other; and the time was appointed for the marriage ceremony. The young Count Von Altenburg had been recalled from the army for the purpose, and was actually on his way to the baron's to receive his bride. Missives had even been received from him, from Würzburg, where he was accidentally detained, mentioning the day and hour when he might be expected to arrive.

The castle was in a tumult of preparation to give him a suitable welcome. The fair bride had been decked out with uncommon care. The two aunts had superintended her toilet, and quarrelled the whole morning about every article of her dress. The young lady had taken advantage of their contest to follow the bent of her own taste; and fortunately it was a good one. She looked as lovely as youthful bridegroom could desire; and the flutter of expectation heightened the lustre of her charms.

In the meantime the fatted calf had been killed; the forests had rung with the clamour of the huntsmen; the kitchen was crowded with good cheer; the cellars had yielded up whole oceans of *Rhein-wein* and *Ferne-wein*; and even the great Heidelberg tun had been laid under contribution. Everything was ready to receive the distinguished guest with *Saus und Braus* in the true spirit of German hospitality—but the guest delayed to make his appearance. Hour rolled after hour. The sun that had poured his downward rays upon the rich forests of the Odenwald, now just gleamed along the summits of the mountain. The baron mounted the highest tower, and strained his eyes in hopes of catching a distant sight of the count and his attendants. Once he thought he beheld them; the sound of horns came floating from the valley, prolonged by

the mountain echoes. A number of horsemen were seen far below, slowly advancing along the road ; but when they had nearly reached the foot of the mountain, they suddenly struck off in a different direction. The last ray of sunshine departed—the bats began to flit by in the twilight—the road grew dimmer and dimmer to the view ; and nothing appeared stirring in it, but now and then a peasant lagging homeward from his labour.

When the old castle of Landshort was in this state of perplexity, a very interesting scene was transacting in a different part of the Odenwald.

The young Count Von Altenburg was tranquilly pursuing his route in that sober jog-trot way in which a man travels towards matrimony when his friends have taken all the trouble and uncertainty of courtship off his hands, and a bride is waiting for him as certainly as a dinner at the end of his journey. He had encountered, at Würzburg, a youthful companion in arms, with whom he had seen some service on the frontiers—Herman Von Starkenfaust, one of the stoutest hands and worthiest hearts of German chivalry, who was now returning from the army. His father's castle was not far distant from the old fortress of Landshort, although an hereditary feud rendered the families hostile, and strangers to each other.

In the warm-hearted moment of recognition the young friends related all their past adventures and fortunes, and the count gave the whole history of his intended nuptials with a young lady whom he had never seen, but of whose charms he had received the most enrapturing descriptions.

As the route of the friends lay in the same direction, they agreed to perform the rest of their journey together ; and that they might do it the more leisurely, set off from Würzburg at an early hour, the count having given directions for his retinue to follow and overtake him.

They beguiled their wayfaring with recollections of their military scenes and adventures ; but the count was apt to be a little tedious, now and then, about the reputed charms of his bride, and the felicity that awaited him.

In this way they had entered among the mountains of the Odenwald and were traversing one of its most lonely and thickly wooded passes. It is well known that the forests of Germany have always been as much infested by robbers as its castles by spectres ; and, at this time, the former were particularly numerous, from the hordes of disbanded soldiers wandering about the country. It will not appear extraordinary, therefore, that the cavaliers were attacked by a gang of these stragglers in the depth of the forest. They defended themselves with bravery, but were nearly overpowered when the count's retinue arrived to their assistance. At

sight of them the robbers fled, but not until the count had received a mortal wound. He was slowly and carefully conveyed back to the city of Wurzburg, and a friar summoned from a neighbouring convent, who was famous for his skill in administering to both soul and body; but half of his skill was superfluous; the moments of the unfortunate count were numbered.

With his dying breath he entreated his friend to repair instantly to the castle of Landshort and explain the fatal cause of his not keeping his appointment with his bride. Though not the most ardent of lovers, he was one of the most punctilious of men, and appeared earnestly solicitous that this mission should be speedily and courteously executed. "Unless this is done," said he, "I shall not sleep quietly in my grave!" He repeated these last words with peculiar solemnity. A request, at a moment so impressive, admitted no hesitation. Starkenfaust endeavoured to soothe him to calmness, promised faithfully to execute his wish, and gave him his hand in solemn pledge. The dying man pressed it in acknowledgment, but soon lapsed into delirium—raved about his bride—his engagement—his plighted word; ordered his horse, that he might ride to the castle of Landshort; and expired in the fancied act of vaulting into the saddle.

Starkenfaust bestowed a sigh, and a soldier's tear, on the untimely fate of his comrade; and then pondered on the awkward mission he had undertaken. His heart was heavy and his head perplexed, for he was to present himself an unbidden guest among hostile people, and to damp their festivity with tidings fatal to their hopes. Still there were certain whisperings of curiosity in his bosom to see this far-famed beauty of Katzenellenbogen, so cautiously shut up from the world; for he was a passionate admirer of the sex, and there was a dash of eccentricity and enterprise in his character that made him fond of all singular adventure.

Previous to his departure he made all due arrangements with the holy fraternity of the convent for the funeral solemnities of his friend, who was to be buried in the cathedral of Wurzburg, near some of his illustrious relatives; and the mourning retinue of the count took charge of his remains.

It is now high time we should return to the ancient family of Katzenellenbogen, who were impatient for their guest, and still more for their dinner; and to the worthy little baron whom we left airing himself on the watch-tower.

Night closed in, but still no guest arrived. The baron descended from the tower in despair. The banquet, which had been delayed from hour to hour, could no longer be postponed. The meats were already overdone; the cook in an agony; and the whole household had the look of a garrison that had been reduced by famine. The

baron was obliged reluctantly to give orders for the feast without the presence of the guest. All were seated at table, and just on the point of commencing, when the sound of a horn from without the gate gave notice of the approach of a stranger. Another long blast filled the old courts of the castle with its echoes, and was answered by the warder from the walls. The baron hastened to receive his future son-in-law.

The drawbridge had been let down, and the stranger was before the gate. He was a tall gallant cavalier, mounted on a black steed. His countenance was pale, but he had a beaming, romantic eye, and an air of stately melancholy. The baron was a little mortified that he should have come in this simple, solitary style. His dignity for a moment was ruffled, and he felt disposed to consider it a want of proper respect for the important occasion, and the important family with which he was to be connected. He, however, pacified himself with the conclusion that it must have been youthful impatience which had induced him thus to spur on sooner than his attendants.

"I am sorry," said the stranger, "to break in upon you thus unseasonably——"

Here the baron interrupted him with a world of compliments and greetings; for, to tell the truth, he prided himself upon his courtesy and his eloquence. The stranger attempted, once or twice, to stem the torrent of words, but in vain, so he bowed his head and suffered it to flow on. By the time the baron had come to a pause, they had reached the inner court of the castle; and the stranger was again about to speak, when he was once more interrupted by the appearance of the female part of the family, leading forth the shrinking and blushing bride. He gazed on her for a moment as one entranced; it seemed as if his whole soul beamed forth in the gaze, and rested upon that lovely form. One of the maiden aunts whispered something in her ear; she made an effort to speak; her moist blue eye was timidly raised; gave a shy glance of inquiry on the stranger; and was cast again to the ground. The words died away; but there was a sweet smile playing about her lips, and a soft dimpling of the cheek, that showed her glance had not been unsatisfactory. It was impossible for a girl of the fond age of eighteen, highly predisposed for love and matrimony, not to be pleased with so gallant a cavalier.

The late hour at which the guest had arrived left no time for parley. The baron was peremptory, and deferred all particular conversation until the morning, and led the way to the untasted banquet.

It was served up in the great hall of the castle. Around the walls hung the hard-favoured portraits of the heroes of the house of

Katzenellenbogen, and the trophies which they had gained in the field and in the chase. Hacked corslets, splintered jousting-spears, and tattered banners were mingled with the spoils of savage warfare; the jaws of the wolf, and the tusks of the boar, grinned horribly among cross-bows and battle-axes, and a huge pair of antlers branched accidentally over the head of the youthful bridegroom.

The cavalier took but little notice of the company or the entertainment. He scarcely tasted the banquet, but seemed absorbed in admiration of his bride. He conversed in a low tone that could not be overheard—for the language of love is never loud; but where is the female ear so dull that it cannot catch the softest whisper of the lover? There was a mingled tenderness and gravity in his manner that appeared to have a powerful effect upon the young lady. Her colour came and went as she listened with deep attention. Now and then she made some blushing reply, and when his eye was turned away, she would steal a side-long glance at his romantic countenance, and heave a gentle sigh of tender happiness. It was evident that the young couple were completely enamoured. The aunts, who were deeply versed in the mysteries of the heart, declared that they had fallen in love with each other at first sight.

The feast went on merrily, or at least noisily, for the guests were all blest with those keen appetites that attend upon light purses and mountain air. The baron told his best and longest stories, and never had he told them so well or with such great effect. If there was anything marvellous, his auditors were lost in astonishment; and if anything facetious, there were sure to laugh exactly in the right place. The baron, it is true, like most great men, was too dignified to utter any joke but a dull one; it was always enforced, however, by a bumper of excellent Hochheimer; and even a dull joke, at one's own table, served up with jolly old wine, is irresistible. Many good things were said by poorer and keener wits, that would not bear repeating, except on similar occasions; many sly speeches whispered in ladies' ears, that almost convulsed them with suppressed laughter; and a song or two roared out by a poor but merry and broad-faced cousin of the baron, that absolutely made the maiden aunts hold up their fans.

Amidst all this revelry the stranger guest maintained a most singular and unseasonable gravity. His countenance assumed a deeper cast of dejection as the evening advanced; and, strange as it may appear, even the baron's jokes seemed only to render him the more melancholy. At times he was lost in thought, and at times there was a perturbed and restless wandering of the eye that bespoke a mind but ill at ease. His conversations with the bride became more and more earnest and mysterious. Lowering clouds

began to steal over the fair serenity of her brow, and tremors to run through her tender frame.

All this could not escape the notice of the company. Their gaiety was chilled by the unaccountable gloom of the bridegroom; their spirits were infected; whispers and glances were interchanged, accompanied by shrugs and dubious shakes of the head. The song and the laugh grew less and less frequent; there were dreary pauses in the conversation, which were at length succeeded by wild tales and supernatural legends. One dismal story produced another still more dismal, and the baron nearly frightened some of the ladies into hysterics with the history of the goblin horseman that carried away the fair Leonora; a dreadful but true story, which has since been put into excellent verse, and is read and believed by all the world.

The bridegroom listened to this tale with profound attention. He kept his eyes steadily fixed on the baron, and, as the story drew to a close, began gradually to rise from his seat, growing taller and taller, until, in the baron's entranced eye, he seemed almost to tower into a giant. The moment the tale was finished, he heaved a deep sigh, and took a solemn farewell of the company. They were all amazed. The baron was perfectly thunderstruck.

"What! going to leave the castle at midnight? why, everything was prepared for his reception: a chamber was ready for him if he wished to retire."

The stranger shook his head mournfully and mysteriously; "I must lay my head in a different chamber to-night."

There was something in this reply, and the tone in which it was uttered, that made the baron's heart misgive him; but he rallied his forces and repeated his hospitable entreaties. The stranger shook his head silently, but positively, at every offer; and, waving his farewell to the company, stalked slowly out of the hall. The maiden aunts were absolutely petrified—the bride hung her head, and a tear stole to her eye.

The baron followed the stranger to the great court of the castle, where the black charger stood pawing the earth, and snorting with impatience. When they had reached the portal, whose deep archway was dimly lighted by a cresset, the stranger paused and addressed the baron in a hollow tone of voice, which the vaulted roof rendered still more sepulchral. "Now that we are alone," said he, "I will impart to you the reason of my going. I have a solemn, an indispensable engagement——"

"Why," said the baron, "cannot you send some one in your place?"

"It admits of no substitute—I must attend it in person—I must away to Würzburg Cathedral——"

"Ay," said the baron, plucking up spirit, "but not until to-morrow—to-morrow you shall take your bride there."

"No! No!" replied the stranger, with tenfold solemnity, "my engagement is with no bride—the worms! the worms expect me! I am a dead man—I have been slain by robbers—my body lies at Würzburg—at midnight I am to be buried—the grave is waiting for me—I must keep my appointment!"

He sprang on his black charger, dashed over the drawbridge, and the clattering of his horse's hoofs was lost in the whistling of the night blast.

The baron returned to the hall in the utmost consternation, and related what had passed. Two ladies fainted outright, others sickened at the idea of having banqueted with a spectre. It was the opinion of some that this might be the wild huntsman famous in German legend. Some talked of mountain sprites, of wood-demons, and of other supernatural beings, with which the good people of Germany have been so grievously harassed since time immemorial. One of the poor relations ventured to suggest that it might be some sportive evasion of the young cavalier, and that the very gloominess of the caprice seemed to accord with so melancholy a personage. This, however, drew on him the indignation of the whole company, and especially of the baron, who looked upon him as little better than an infidel; so that he was fain to abjure his heresy as speedily as possible, and come into the faith of the true believers.

But, whatever may have been the doubts entertained, they were completely put to an end by the arrival, next day, of regular missives, confirming the intelligence of the young count's murder, and his interment in Würzburg Cathedral.

The dismay at the castle may well be imagined. The baron shut himself up in his chamber. The guests, who had come to rejoice with him, could not think of abandoning him in his distress. They wandered about the courts, or collected in groups in the hall, shaking their heads and shrugging their shoulders at the troubles of so good a man; and sat longer than ever at table, and ate and drank more stoutly than ever, by way of keeping up their spirits. But the situation of the widowed bride was the most pitiable. To have lost a husband before she had even embraced him—and such a husband! If the very spectre could be so gracious and noble, what must have been the living man! She filled the house with lamentations.

On the night of the second day of her widowhood she had retired to her chamber, accompanied by one of her aunts, who insisted on sleeping with her. The aunt, who was one of the best tellers of ghost stories in all Germany, had just been recounting one of her

longest, and had fallen asleep in the very midst of it. The chamber was remote, and overlooked a small garden. The niece lay pensively gazing at the beams of the rising moon, as they trembled on the leaves of an aspen-tree before the lattice. The castle clock had just tolled midnight, when a soft strain of music stole up from the garden. She rose hastily from her bed, and stepped lightly to the window. A tall figure stood among the shadows of the trees. As it raised its head, a beam of moonlight fell upon the countenance. Heaven and earth! she beheld the spectre bridegroom! A loud shriek at that moment burst upon her ear, and her aunt, who had been awakened by the music, and had followed her silently to the window, fell into her arms. When she looked again, the spectre had disappeared.

Of the two females, the aunt now required the most soothing, for she was perfectly beside herself with terror. As to the young lady, there was something, even in the spectre of her lover, that seemed endearing. There was still the semblance of manly beauty; and though the shadow of a man is but little calculated to satisfy the affections of a love-sick girl, yet, where the substance is not to be had, even that is consoling. The aunt declared she would never sleep in that chamber again; the niece, for once, was refractory, and declared as strongly that she would sleep in no other in the castle: the consequence was, that she had to sleep in it alone; but she drew a promise from her aunt not to relate the story of the spectre, lest she should be denied the only melancholy pleasure left her on earth—that of inhabiting the chamber over which the guardian shade of her lover kept its nightly vigils.

How long the good old lady would have observed this promise is uncertain, for she dearly loved to talk of the marvellous, and there is a triumph in being the first to tell a frightful story; it is, however, still quoted in the neighbourhood, as a memorable instance of female secrecy, that she kept it to herself for a whole week; when she was suddenly absolved from all further restraint by intelligence brought to the breakfast table one morning, that the young lady was not to be found. Her room was empty—the bed had not been slept in—the window was open, and the bird had flown.

The astonishment and concern with which the intelligence was received can only be imagined by those who have witnessed the agitation which the mishaps of a great man cause among his friends. Even the poor relations paused for a moment from the indefatigable labours of the trencher; when the aunt, who had at first been struck speechless, wrung her hands, and shrieked out, "The goblin, the goblin! she's carried away by the goblin!"

In a few words she related the fearful scene of the garden, and

concluded that the spectre must have carried off his bride. Two of the domestics corroborated the opinion, for they had heard the clattering of a horse's hoofs down the mountain about midnight, and had no doubt that it was the spectre on his black charger, bearing her away to the tomb. All present were struck with the direful probability; for events of the kind are extremely common in Germany, as many well-authenticated histories bear witness.

What a lamentable situation was that of the poor baron! What a heart-rending dilemma for a fond father, and a member of the great family of Katzenellenbogen! His only daughter had either been rapt away to the grave, or he was to have some wood-demon for a son-in-law, and perchance a troop of goblin grandchildren. As usual, he was completely bewildered, and all the castle in an uproar. The men were ordered to take horse, and to scour every road and path and glen of the Odenwald. The baron himself had just drawn on his jack-boots, girded on his sword, and was about to mount his steed to sally forth on the doubtful quest, when he was brought to a pause by a new apparition. A lady was seen approaching the castle, mounted on a palfrey, attended by a cavalier on horseback. She galloped up to the gate, sprang from her horse, and, falling at the baron's feet, embraced his knees. It was his lost daughter, and her companion—the Spectre Bridegroom! The baron was astounded. He looked at his daughter, then at the spectre, and almost doubted the evidence of his senses. The latter, too, was wonderfully improved in his appearance, since his visit to the world of spirits. His dress was splendid, and set off a noble figure of manly symmetry. He was no longer pale and melancholy. His fine countenance was flushed with the glow of youth, and joy rioted in his large dark eye.

The mystery was soon cleared up. The cavalier (for in truth, as you must have known all the while, he was no goblin) announced himself as Sir Herman Von Starkenfaust. He related his adventure with the young count. He told how he had hastened to the castle to deliver the unwelcome tidings, but that the eloquence of the baron had interrupted him in every attempt to tell his tale; how the sight of the bride had completely captivated him, and that to pass a few hours near her, he had tacitly suffered the mistake to continue; how he had been sorely perplexed in what way to make a decent retreat, until the baron's goblin stories had suggested his eccentric exit; how, fearing the feudal hostility of the family, he had repeated his visits by stealth—had haunted the garden beneath the young lady's window—had wooed—had won—had borne away in triumph—and, in a word, had wedded the fair.

Under any other circumstances the baron would have been inflexible, for he was tenacious of paternal authority, and devoutly

obstinate in all family feuds ; but he loved his daughter ; he had lamented her as lost ; he rejoiced to find her still alive ; and, though her husband was of a hostile house, yet, thank Heaven, he was not a goblin. There was something, it must be acknowledged, that did not exactly accord with his notions of strict veracity, in the joke the knight had passed upon him of his being a dead man ; but several old friends present, who had served in the wars, assured him that every stratagem was excusable in love, and that the cavalier was entitled to especial privilege, having lately served as a trooper.

Matters, therefore, were happily arranged. The baron pardoned the young couple on the spot. The revels at the castle were resumed. The poor relations overwhelmed this new member of the family with loving kindness ; he was so gallant, so generous—and so rich. The aunts, it is true, were somewhat scandalised that their system of strict seclusion and passive obedience should be so badly exemplified, but attributed it all to their negligence in not having the windows grated. One of them was particularly mortified at having her marvellous story marred, and that the only spectre she had ever seen should turn out a counterfeit ; but the niece seemed perfectly happy at having found him substantial flesh and blood—and so the story ends.

AUGUSTUS B. LONGSTREET

1790-1870

THE HORSE-SWAP

DURING the session of the Supreme Court, in the village of—, about three weeks ago, when a number of people were collected in the principal street of the village, I observed a young man riding up and down the street, as I supposed, in a violent passion. He galloped this way, then that, and then the other; spurred his horse to one group of citizens, then to another; then dashed off at half speed, as if fleeing from danger; and, suddenly checking his horse, returned first in a pace, then in a trot, and then in a canter. While he was performing these various evolutions, he cursed, swore, whooped, screamed, and tossed himself in every attitude which man could assume on horseback. In short, he *cavorted* most magnanimously (a term which, in our tongue, expresses all that I have described, and a little more), and seemed to be setting all creation at defiance. As I like to see all that is passing, I determined to take a position a little nearer to him, and to ascertain, if possible, what it was that affected him so sensibly. Accordingly, I approached a crowd before which he had stopped for a moment, and examined it with the strictest scrutiny. But I could see nothing in it which seemed to have anything to do with the cavorter. Every man appeared to be in good humour, and all minding their own business. Not one so much as noticed the principal figure. Still he went on. After a semicolon pause, which my appearance seemed to produce (for he eyed me closely as I approached), he fetched a whoop, and swore that “he could out-swap any live man, woman, or child that ever walked those hills, or that ever straddled horseflesh since the days of old daddy Adam. Stranger,” said he to me, “did you ever see the *Yellow Blossom* from Jasper?”

“No,” said I; “but I have often heard of him.”

“I’m the boy,” continued he, “perhaps a *leetle*, jist a *leetle*, of the best man at a hoss-swap that ever trod shoe-leather.”

I began to feel my situation a little awkward, when I was relieved by a man somewhat advanced in years, who stepped up and began to survey the “*Yellow Blossom*’s” horse with much apparent

interest. This drew the rider's attention, and he turned the conversation from me to the stranger.

"Well, my old coon," said he, "do you want to swap hosses?"

"Why, I don't know," replied the stranger; "I believe I've got a beast I'd trade with you for that one, if you like him."

"Well, fetch up your nag, my old cock: you're jist the lark I wanted to get hold of. I am perhaps a *leetle*, jist a *leetle*, of the best man at a hoss-swap that ever stole *cracklins* out of his mammy's fat-gourd. Where's your hoss?"

"I'll bring him presently; but I want to examine your horse a little."

"Oh, look at him," said the Blossom, alighting and hitting him a cut; "look at him. He's the best piece of hoss-flesh in the thirteen united universal worlds. There's no sort o' mistake in little Bullet. He can pick up miles on his feet and fling 'em behind him as fast as the next man's hoss, I don't care where he comes from. And he can keep at it as long as the sun can shine without resting."

During this harangue, little Bullet looked as if he understood it all, believed it, and was ready at any moment to verify it. He was a horse of goodly countenance, rather expressive of vigilance than fire; though an unnatural appearance of fierceness was thrown into it by the loss of his ears, which had been cropped pretty close to his head. Nature had done but little for Bullet's head and neck; but he managed, in a great measure, to hide their defects by bowing perpetually. He had obviously suffered severely for corn; but if his ribs and hip-bones had not disclosed the fact, *he* never would have done it; for he was in all respects as cheerful and happy as if he commanded all the corn-cribs and fodder-stacks in Georgia. His height was about twelve hands; but, as his shape partook somewhat of that of the giraffe, his haunches stood much lower. They were short, straight, peaked, and concave. Bullet's tail, however, made amends for all his defects. All that the artist could do to beautify it had been done; and all that horse could do to compliment the artist Bullet did. His tail was nicked in superior style, and exhibited the line of beauty in so many directions that it could not fail to hit the most fastidious taste in some of them. From the root it drooped into a graceful festoon, then rose in a handsome curve, then resumed its first direction, and then mounted suddenly upward like a cypress knee to a perpendicular of about two and a half inches. The whole had a careless and bewitching inclination to the right. Bullet obviously knew where his beauty lay, and took all occasions to display it to the best advantage. If a stick cracked, or if any one moved suddenly about him, or coughed, or hawked, or spoke a little louder than common, up went Bullet's tail like lightning; and if the *going up* did not please, the *coming*

down must of necessity, for it was as different from the other movement as was its direction. The first was a bold and rapid flight upward, usually to an angle of forty-five degrees. In this position he kept his interesting appendage until he satisfied himself that nothing in particular was to be done; when he commenced dropping it by half inches, in second beats, then in triple time, then faster and shorter, and faster and shorter still, until it finally died away imperceptibly into its natural position. If I might compare sights to sounds I should say its *settling* was more like the note of a locust than anything else in nature.

Either from native sprightliness of disposition, from uncontrollable activity, or from an unconquerable habit of removing flies by the stamping of the feet, Bullet never stood still, but always kept up a gentle fly-scaring movement of his limbs, which was peculiarly interesting.

"I tell you, man," proceeded the Yellow Blossom, "he's the best live hoss that ever trod the grit of Georgia. Bob Smart knows the hoss. Come here, Bob, and mount this hoss, and show Bullet's motions." Here Bullet bristled up, and looked as if he had been hunting for Bob all day long and had just found him. Bob sprang on his back.

"Boo-oo-oo!" said Bob, with a fluttering noise of the lips; and away went Bullet, as if in a quarter-race, with all his beauties spread in handsome style.

"Now fetch him back," said Blossom. Bullet turned, and came in pretty much as he went out.

"Now trot him by." Bullet reduced his tail to "customary," sidled to the right and left airily, and exhibited at least three varieties of trot in the short space of fifty yards.

"Make him pace." Bob commenced twitching the bridle and kicking at the same time. These inconsistent movements obviously (and most naturally) disconcerted Bullet; for it was impossible for him to learn from them whether he was to proceed or stand still. He started to trot, and was told that wouldn't do. He attempted a canter, and was checked again. He stopped, and was urged to go on. Bullet now rushed into the wild field of experiment, and struck out a gait of his own, that completely turned the tables upon his rider, and certainly deserved a patent. It seemed to have derived its elements from the jig, the minuet, and the cotillon. If it was not a pace, it certainly had *pace* in it, and no man would venture to call it anything else; so it passed off to the satisfaction of the owner.

"Walk him." Bullet was now at home again; and he walked as if money was staked on him.

The stranger, whose name, I afterwards learned, was Peter Ketch, having examined Bullet to his heart's content, ordered his son

Neddy to go and bring up Kit. Neddy soon appeared upon Kit,—a well-formed sorrel of the middle size, and in good order. His *tout ensemble* threw Bullet entirely in the shade, though a glance was sufficient to satisfy any one that Bullet had the decided advantage of him in point of intellect.

"Why, man," said Blossom, "do you bring such a hoss as that to trade for Bullet? Oh, I see you've no notion of trading."

"Ride him off, Neddy," said Peter. Kit put off at a handsome lope. "Trot him back!" Kit came in at a long, sweeping trot, and stopped suddenly at the crowd.

"Well," said Blossom, "let me look at him: maybe he'll do to plough."

"Examine him!" said Peter, taking hold of the bridle close to the mouth. "He's nothing but a tacky. He ain't as *pretty* a horse as Bullet, I know; but he'll do. Start 'em together for a hundred and fifty mile, and if Kit ain't twenty mile ahead of him at the coming out, any man may take Kit for nothing. But he's a monstrous mean horse, gentlemen; any man may see that. He's the scariest horse, too, you ever saw. He won't do to hunt on, nohow. Stranger, will you let Neddy have your rifle to shoot off him? Lay the rifle between his ears, Neddy, and shoot at the blaze in that stump. Tell me when his head is high enough."

Ned fired, and hit the blaze; and Kit did not move a hair's breadth.

"Neddy, take a couple of sticks and beat on that hogshhead at Kit's tail."

Ned made a tremendous rattling, at which Bullet took fright, broke his bridle, and dashed off in grand style, and would have stopped all further negotiations by going home in disgust, had not a traveller arrested him and brought him back; but Kit did not move.

"I tell you, gentlemen," continued Peter, "he's the scariest horse you ever saw. He ain't as gentle as Bullet, but he won't do any harm if you watch him. Shall I put him in a cart, gig, or wagon for you, stranger? He'll cut the same capers there he does here. He's a monstrous mean horse."

During all this time Blossom was examining him with the nicest scrutiny. Having examined his frame and limbs, he now looked at his eyes.

"He's got a curious look out of his eyes," said Blossom.

"Oh, yes, sir," said Peter, "just as blind as a bat. Blind horses always have clear eyes. Make a motion at his eyes, if you please, sir."

Blossom did so, and Kit threw up his head rather if something pricked him under the chin than as if fearing a blow. Blossom

repeated the experiment, and Kit jerked back in considerable astonishment.

"Stone-blind, you see, gentlemen," proceeded Peter; "but he's just as good to travel of a dark night as if he had eyes."

"Blame my buttons," said Blossom, "if I like them eyes."

"No," said Peter, "nor I neither. I'd rather have 'em made of diamonds; but they'll do, if they don't show as much white as Bullet's."

"Well," said Blossom, "make a pass at me."

"No: you made the banter, now make your pass."

"Well, I'm never afraid to price my horses. You must give me twenty-five dollars boot."

"Oh, certainly; say fifty, and my saddle and bridle in. Here, Neddy, my son, take away daddy's horse."

"Well," said Blossom, "I've made my pass, now make yours."

"I'm for short talk in a horse-swap, and therefore always tell a gentleman at once what I mean to do. You must give me ten dollars."

Blossom swore absolutely, roundly, and profanely that he never would give boot.

"Well," said Peter, "I didn't care about trading; but you cut such high shines that I thought I'd like to back you out, and I've done it. Gentlemen, you see I've brought him to a back."

"Come, old man," said Blossom, "I've been joking with you. I begin to think you do want to trade: therefore, give me five dollars and take Bullet. I'd rather lose ten dollars any time than not make a trade, though I hate to fling away a good hoss."

"Well," said Peter, "I'll be as clever as you are. Just put the five dollars on Bullet's back, and hand him over: it's a trade."

Blossom swore again, as roundly as before, that he would not give boot; "and," said he, "Bullet wouldn't hold five dollars on his back, nohow. But, as I bantered you, if you say an even swap, here's at you."

"I told you," said Peter, "I'd be as clever as you: therefore, here goes two dollars more, just for trade sake. Give me three dollars, and it's a bargain."

Blossom repeated his former assertion; and here the parties stood for a long time, and the bystanders (for many were now collected) began to taunt both parties. After some time, however, it was pretty unanimously decided that the old man had backed Blossom out.

At length Blossom swore he "never would be backed out for three dollars after bantering a man"; and, accordingly, they closed the trade.

"Now," said Blossom, as he handed Peter the three dollars, "I'm

a man that when he makes a bad trade makes the most of it until he can make a better. I'm for no rues and after-claps."

"That's just my way," said Peter. "I never goes to law to mend my bargains."

"Ah, you're the kind of boy I love to trade with. Here's your hoss, old man. Take the saddle and bridle off him, and I'll strip yours; but lift up the blanket easy from Bullet's back, for he's a mighty tender-backed hoss."

The old man removed the saddle, but the blanket stuck fast. He attempted to raise it, and Bullet bowed himself, switched his tail, danced a little, and gave signs of biting.

"Don't hurt him, old man," said Blossom, archly; "take it off easy. I am, perhaps, a leetle of the best man at a hoss-swap that ever caught a coon."

Peter continued to pull at the blanket more and more roughly, and Bullet became more and more *cavortish*, insomuch that when the blanket came off he had reached the kicking-point in good earnest.

The removal of the blanket disclosed a sore on Bullet's backbone that seemed to have defied all medical skill. It measured six full inches in length and four in breadth, and had as many features as Bullet had motions. My heart sickened at the sight; and I felt that the brute who had been riding him in that situation deserved the halter.

The prevailing feeling, however, was that of mirth. The laugh became loud and general at the old man's expense, and rustic witticisms were liberally bestowed upon him and his late purchaser. These Blossom continued to provoke by various remarks. He asked the old man "if he thought Bullet would let five dollars lie on his back." He declared most seriously that he had owned that horse three months, and had never discovered before that he had a sore back, "or he should never have thought of trading him," etc., etc.

The old man bore it all with the most philosophic composure. He evinced no astonishment at his late discovery, and made no replies. But his son Neddy had not disciplined his feelings quite so well. His eyes opened wider and wider from the first to the last pull of the blanket; and when the whole sore burst upon his view, astonishment and fright seemed to contend for the mastery of his countenance. As the blanket disappeared, he stuck his hands in his breeches pockets, heaved a deep sigh, and lapsed into a profound reverie, from which he was only roused by the cuts at his father. He bore them as long as he could; and, when he could contain himself no longer, he began, with a certain wildness of expression which gave a peculiar interest to what he uttered: "His back's mighty bad off; but dod drot my soul if he's put it to daddy as bad as he

thanks he has, for old Kit's both blind and deaf, I'll be dod drot if he ein't !”

“The devil he is !” said Blossom.

“Yes, dod drot my soul if he ein't. You walk him, and see if he ein't. His eyes don't look like it ; but he'd jist as lieve go ag'in' the house with you, or in a ditch, as anyhow. Now you go try him.”

The laugh was now turned on Blossom ; and many rushed to test the fidelity of the little boy's report. A few experiments established its truth beyond controversy.

“Neddy,” said the old man, “you oughtn't to try and make people discontented with their things. Stranger, don't mind what the little boy says. If you can only get Kit rid of them little railings, you'll find him all sorts of a horse. You are a lot s the best man at a horse-swap that ever I got hold of ; but don't fool away Kit. Come, Neddy, my son, let's be moving : the stranger seems to be getting snappish.”

AUGUSTUS B. LONGSTREET

GEORGIA THEATRICALS

IF my memory fail me not, the 10th of June 1809 found me, at about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, ascending a long and gentle slope in what was called "The Dark Corner" of Lincoln. I believe it took its name from the moral darkness which reigned over that portion of the county at the time of which I am speaking. If in this point of view it was but a shade darker than the rest of the county, it was inconceivably dark. If any man can name a trick or sin which had not been committed at the time of which I am speaking in the very focus of the county's illumination (Lincolnton), he must himself be the most inventive of the tricky and the very Judas of sinners. Since that time, however (all humour aside), Lincoln has become a living proof "that light shineth in darkness." Could I venture to mingle the solemn with the ludicrous, even for the purposes of honourable contrast, I could adduce from this county instances of the most numerous and wonderful transitions from vice and folly to virtue and holiness which have ever, perhaps, been witnessed since the days of the apostolic ministry. So much, lest it should be thought by some that what I am about to relate is characteristic of the county in which it occurred.

Whatever may be said of the moral condition of the Dark Corner at the time just mentioned, its natural condition was anything but dark. It smiled in all the charms of spring; and spring borrowed a new charm from its undulating grounds, its luxuriant woodlands, its sportive streams, its vocal birds, and its blushing flowers.

Rapt with the enchantment of the season and the scenery around me, I was slowly rising the slope, when I was startled by loud, profane, and boisterous voices which seemed to proceed from a thick covert of undergrowth about two hundred yards in the advance of me, and about one hundred to the right of my road.

"You kin, kin you?"

"Yes, I kin, and am able to do it! Boo-oo-oo! Oh wake snakes, and walk your chalks! Brimstone and—fire! Don't hold me, Nick Stoval! The fight's made up, and let's go at it. —my soul

if I don't jump down his throat and gallop every chattering out of him before you can say 'quit!'"

"Now, Nick, don't hold him! Jist let the wild-cat come, and I'll tame him. Ned'll see me a fair fight: won't you, Ned?"

"Oh, yes; I'll see you a fair fight, blast my old shoes if I don't."

"That's sufficient, as Tom Haines said when he saw the elephant. Now let him come."

Thus they went on, with countless oaths interspersed, which I dare not even hint at, and with much that I could not distinctly hear.

In mercy's name, thought I, what band of ruffians has selected this holy season and this heavenly retreat for such Pandemonian riots! I quickened my gait, and had come nearly opposite to the thick grove whence the noise proceeded, when my eye caught indistinctly and at intervals, through the foliage of the dwarf-oaks and hickories which intervened, glimpses of a man or men who seemed to be in a violent struggle; and I could occasionally catch those deep-drawn emphatic oaths which men in conflict utter when they deal blows. I dismounted, and hurried to the spot with all speed. I had overcome about half the space which separated it from me, when I saw the combatants come to the ground, and, after a short struggle, I saw the uppermost one (for I could not see the other) make a heavy plunge with both his thumbs, and at the same instant I heard a cry in the accent of keenest torture, "Enough! my eye's out!"

I was so completely horror-struck that I stood transfixed for a moment to the spot where the cry met me. The accomplices in the hellish deed which had been perpetrated had all fled at my approach; at least I supposed so, for they were not to be seen.

"Now, blast your corn-shucking soul," said the victor (a youth about eighteen years old) as he rose from the ground, "come cuttin' your shines 'bout me ag'in, next time I come to the Court-house, will you! Git your owl-eye in ag'in if you kin!"

At this moment he saw me for the first time. He looked excessively embarrassed, and was moving off, when I called to him, in a tone emboldened by the sacredness of my office and the iniquity of his crime, "Come back, you brute, and assist me in relieving your fellow-mortal, whom you have ruined for ever!"

My rudeness subdued his embarrassment in an instant; and with a taunting curl of the nose, he replied, "You needn't kick before you're spurred. There ain't nobody there, nor hain't been, nother, I was jist seein' how I could 'a' fout." So saying he bounded to his plough, which stood in the corner of the fence about fifty yards beyond the battle-ground.

And—would you believe it, gentle reader?—his report was true. All that I had heard and seen was nothing more nor less than a

Lincoln rehearsal, in which the youth who had just left me had played all the parts of all the characters in a court-house fight.

I went to the ground from which he had risen, and there were the prints of his two thumbs, plunged up to the balls in the mellow earth, about the distance of a man's eyes apart ; and the ground around was broken up as if two stags had been engaged upon it.

SOLOMON F. SMITH

1801-1869

WOODING UP

DOES any one remember the *Caravan*? She was what would now be considered a slow boat: *then* (1827) she was regularly advertised as the "fast-running," etc. Her regular trips from New Orleans to Natchez were usually made in from six to eight days; a trip made by her in five days was considered remarkable. A voyage from New Orleans to Vicksburg and back, including stoppages, generally entitled the officers and crew to a month's wages. Whether the *Caravan* ever achieved the feat of a voyage to the Falls (Louisville) I have never learned; if she did, she must have "had a time of it!"

It was my fate to take passage in this boat. The captain was a good-natured, easy-going man, careful of the comfort of his passengers, and exceedingly fond of the game of brag. We had been out a little more than five days, and we were in hopes of seeing the bluffs of Natchez on the next day. Our wood was getting low, and night coming on. The pilot on duty above (the other pilot held three aces at the time, and was just calling out the captain, who "went it strong" on three kings) sent down word that the mate had reported the stock of wood reduced to half a cord. The worthy captain excused himself to the pilot whose watch was below, and the two passengers who made up the party, and hurried to the deck, where he soon discovered, by the landmarks, that we were about half a mile from a wood-yard which he said was situated "right round yonder point." "But," muttered the captain, "I don't much like to take wood of the yellow-faced old scoundrel who owns it: he always charges a quarter of a dollar more than any one else. However, there's no other chance." The boat was pushed to her utmost, and in a less than an hour, when our fuel was about giving out, we made the point, and our cables were out and fastened to trees alongside of a good-sized wood-pile.

"Halloo, colonel! how d'ye sell your wood *this* time?"

A yellow-faced old gentleman, with a two weeks' beard, strings over his shoulders holding up to his armpits a pair of copperas-coloured linsey-woolsey pants, the legs of which reached a very little below

the knee, shoes without stockings, a faded broad-brimmed hat which had once been black, and a pipe in his mouth, casting a glance at the empty guards of our boat, and uttering a grunt as he rose from fastening our "spring-line," answered :

"Why, capting, we must charge you three and a quarter *this* time."

"The d—l!" replied the captain (captains did swear a little in those days): "what's the odd quarter for, I should like to know? You only charged me three as I went down."

"Why, capting," drawled out the wood-merchant, with a sort of leer on his yellow countenance which clearly indicated that his wood was good as sold, "wood's riz since you went down two weeks ago; besides, you are awar that you very seldom stop going down: when you're going up, you're sometimes obleeged to give me a call, becaze the current's ag'inst you, and there's no other wood-yard for nine miles ahead; and if you happen to be nearly out of fooel, why——"

"Well, well," interrupted the captain, "We'll take a few cords, under the circumstances." And he returned to his game of brag.

In about half an hour we felt the *Caravan* commence paddling again. Supper was over, and I retired to my upper berth, situated alongside and overlooking the brag-table, where the captain was deeply engaged, having now the other pilot as his principal opponent. We jogged on quietly, and seemed to be going at a good rate.

"How does that wood burn?" inquired the captain of the mate, who was looking on at the game.

"Tisn't of much account, I reckon," answered the mate: "it's cottonwood, and most of it green at that."

"Well, Thompson (three aces again, stranger: I'll take that X and the small change, if you please: it's your deal),—Thompson, I say, we'd better take three or four cords at the next wood-yard: it can't be more than six miles from here (two aces and a bragger, with the age! hand over those V's)."

The game went on, and the paddles kept moving. At eleven o'clock it was reported to the captain that we were nearing the wood-yard, the light being distinctly seen by the pilot on duty.

"Head her in-shore, then, and take in six cords, if it's good: see to it, Thompson. I can't very well leave the game now: it's getting right warm! This pilot's beating us all to smash."

The wooding completed, we paddled on again. The captain seemed somewhat vexed when the mate informed him that the price was the same as at the last wood-yard,—three and a quarter—but soon again became interested in the game.

From my upper berth (there were no state-rooms then) I could observe the movements of the players. All the contention appeared

to be between the captain and the pilots (the latter personages took it turn and turn about, steering and playing brag), *one* of them almost invariably winning, while the two passengers merely went through the ceremony of dealing, cutting, and paying up their "anties." They were anxious to learn the game; and they *did* learn it! Once in a while, indeed, seeing they had two aces and a bragger, they would venture a bet of five or ten dollars, but they were always compelled to back out before the tremendous bragging of the captain or pilot, or, if they did venture to "call out" on two "bullits and a bragger," they had the mortification to find one of the officers had the same kind of a hand, and was *more venerable*! Still, with all these disadvantages, they continued playing: they wanted to learn the game.

At two o'clock the captain asked the mate how we were getting on.

"Oh, pretty glibly, sir," replied the mate: "we can scarcely tell what headway we *are* making, for we are obliged to keep the middle of the river, and there is the shadow of a fog rising. This wood seems rather better than that we took in at yellow-face's, but we're nearly out again, and must be looking out for more. I saw a light just ahead on the right. Shall we hail?"

"Yes, yes," replied the captain; "ring the bell and ask 'em what's the price of wood up here.—I've got you again; here's double kings."

I heard the bell, and the pilot's hail: "What's *your* price for wood?"

A youthful voice on the shore answered, "Three *and* a quarter!"

"D—n it!" ejaculated the captain, who had just lost the price of two cords to the pilot—the strangers suffering some at the same time—"three and a quarter again! Are we never to get to a cheaper country?—Deal, sir, if you please: better luck next time." The other pilot's voice was again heard on deck:

"How much have you?"

"Only about ten cords, sir," was the reply of the youthful salesman.

The captain here told Thompson to take six cords, which would last till daylight, and again turned his attention to the game.

The pilots here changed places. *When did they sleep?*

Wood taken in, the *Caravan* again took her place in the middle of the stream, paddling on as usual.

Day at length dawned. The brag-party broke up, and settlements were being made, during which operation the captain's bragging propensities were exercised in cracking up the speed of his boat, which, by his reckoning, must have made at least sixty miles, and would have made many more if he could have procured good wood. It appears the two passengers, in their first lesson, had incidentally

lost one hundred and twenty dollars. The captain, as he rose to see about taking in some *good* wood, which he felt sure of obtaining, now he had got above the level country, winked at his opponent, the pilot, with whom he had been on very bad terms during the progress of the game, and said, in an undertone, "Forty apiece for you and I and James [the other pilot] is not bad for one night."

I had risen and went out with the captain, to enjoy a view of the bluffs. There was just fog enough to prevent the vision taking in more than sixty yards: so I was disappointed in my expectation. We were nearing the shore for the purpose of looking for wood, the banks being invisible from the middle of the river.

"There it is!" exclaimed the captain, "stop her!" Ding—ding—ding! went the big bell, and the captain hailed:

"Halloo! the wood-yard!"

"Halloo yourself!" answered a squeaking female voice, which came from a woman with a petticoat over her shoulders in place of a shawl.

"What's the price of wood?"

"I think you ought to know the price by this time," answered the old lady in the petticoat: "it's three and a qua-a-rter! and now you know it."

"Three and the d—l!" broke in the captain. "What! have you raised on *your* wood too? I'll give you *three*, and not a cent more."

"Well," replied the petticoat, "here comes the old man: *he'll* talk to you."

And, sure enough, out crept from the cottage the veritable faded hat, copperas-coloured pants, yellow countenance, and two weeks' beard we had seen the night before, and the same voice we had heard regulating the price of cottonwood squeaked out the following sentence, accompanied by the same leer of the same yellow countenance:

"Why, darn it all, capting, there is but three or four cords left, and, *since it's you*, I don't care if I *do* let you have it for *three*, as *you're a good customer!*"

After a quick glance at the landmarks around, the captain bolted, and turned in to take some rest.

The fact became apparent—the reader will probably have discovered it some time since—that *we had been wooding all night at the same wood-yard!*

SOLOMON F. SMITH

JENKS'S WHISKERS

THERE lived in Macon a dandified individual, whom we will call Jenks. This individual had a tolerably favourable opinion of his personal appearance. His fingers were looped with rings, and his shirt-bosom was decked with a magnificent breastpin ; coat, hat, vest, and boots were made exactly to fit ; he wore kid gloves of remarkable whiteness ; his hair was oiled and dressed in the latest and best style ; and, to complete his killing appearance, he sported an enormous pair of *real whiskers*. Of these whiskers Jenks was as proud as a young cat is of her tail when she first discovers she has one.

I was sitting one day in a broker's office, when Jenks came in to inquire the price of exchange on New York. He was invited to sit down, and a cigar was offered him. Conversation turning on the subject of buying and selling stocks, a remark was made by a gentleman present that he thought no person should sell out stock in such-and-such a bank at that time, as it *must* get better in a few days.

"I will sell anything I've got, if I can make anything on it," replied Jenks.

"Oh, no," replied one, "not anything : you wouldn't sell your whiskers !"

A loud laugh followed this chance remark. Jenks immediately answered, "I would ; but who would want them ? Any person making the purchase would lose money by the operation, I'm thinking."

"Well," I observed, "I would be willing to take the speculation, if the price could be made reasonable."

"Oh, I'll sell 'em cheap," answered Jenks, winking at the gentleman present.

"What do you call cheap ?" I inquired.

"I'll sell 'em for fifty dollars," Jenks answered, puffing forth a cloud of smoke across the counter and repeating the wink.

"Well, that *is* cheap. And you'll sell your whiskers for fifty dollars ?"

"I will."

"Both of them?"

"Both of them."

"I'll take them. When can I have them?"

"Any time you choose to call for them."

"Very well: they're mine. I think I shall double my money on them, at least."

I took a bill of sale as follows:

"Received of Sol. Smith Fifty Dollars, in full for my crop of whiskers, to be worn and taken care of by me, and delivered to him when called for.
J. JENKS."

The sum of fifty dollars was paid, and Jenks left the broker's office in high glee, flourishing five Central Bank X's, and telling all his acquaintances of the great bargain he had made in the sale of his whiskers.

The broker and his friends laughed at me for being taken in so nicely. "Never mind," said I: "let those laugh that win: I'll make a profit out of those whiskers, depend on it."

For a week after this, whenever I met Jenks, he asked me when I intended to call for my whiskers.

"I'll let you know when I want them," was always my answer. "Take good care of them: oil them occasionally; I shall call for them one of these days."

A splendid ball was to be given. I ascertained that Jenks was to be one of the managers, he being a great ladies'-man (on account of his whiskers, I suppose), and it occurred to me that before the ball took place I might as well call for my whiskers.

One morning I met Jenks in a barber's shop. He was adorning before a large mirror, and combing up my whiskers at a devil of a rate.

"Ah! there you are, old fellow," said he, speaking to my reflection through the glass. "Come for your whiskers, I suppose?"

"Oh, no hurry," I replied, as I sat down for a shave.

"Always ready, you know," he answered, giving a final tie to his cravat.

"Come to think of it," I said, musingly, as the barber began to put the lather on my face, "perhaps now would be as good a time as another. You *may* sit down and let the barber try his hand at the whiskers."

"You couldn't wait until to-morrow, could you?" he asked, hesitatingly. "There's a *ball* to-night, you know——"

"To be sure there is, and I think you ought to go with a clean face: at all events, I don't see any reason why you should expect to wear *my* whiskers to that ball: so sit down."

He rather sulkily obeyed, and in a few moments his cheeks were

in a perfect foam of lather. The barber flourished his razor, and was about to commence operations, when I suddenly changed my mind.

"Stop, Mr. Barber," I said: "you needn't shave off those whiskers just yet." So he quietly put up his razor, while Jenks started up from the chair in something very much resembling a passion.

"This is trifling!" he exclaimed. "You have claimed your whiskers: take them."

"I believe a man has a right to do as he pleases with his own property," I remarked, and left Jenks washing his face.

At dinner, that day, the conversation turned upon the whisker affair. It seems the whole town had got wind of it, and Jenks could not walk the streets without the remark being continually made by the boys, "There goes the man with old Sol's whiskers!" And they had grown to an immense size, for he dared not trim them. In short, I became convinced Jenks was waiting very impatiently for me to assert my rights in the property. It happened that several of the party were sitting opposite me at dinner who were present when the singular bargain was made, and they all urged me to take the whiskers that very day, and thus compel Jenks to go to the ball whiskerless or stay at home. I agreed with them it was about time to reap my crop, and promised that if they would all meet me at the broker's shop, where the purchase had been made, I would make a call on Jenks that evening after he had dressed for the ball. All promised to be present at the proposed shaving operation in the broker's office, and I sent for Jenks and the barber. On the appearance of Jenks, it was evident he was much vexed at the sudden call upon him, and his vexation was certainly not lessened when he saw the broker's office filled to overflowing by spectators anxious to behold the barbarous proceeding.

"Come, be in a hurry," he said, as he took a seat, and leaned his head against the counter for support: "I can't stay here long: several ladies are waiting for me to escort them to the ball."

"True, very true: you are one of the managers, I recollect. Mr. Barber, don't detain the gentleman: go to work at once."

The lathering was soon over, and with about three strokes of the razor one side of his face was deprived of its ornament.

"Come, come," said Jenks: "push ahead: there is no time to be lost. Let the gentleman have his whiskers: he is impatient."

"Not at all," I replied, coolly. "I'm in no sort of a hurry myself; and, now I think of it, as *your* time must be precious at this particular time, several ladies being in waiting for you to escort them to the ball, I believe I'll not take the other whisker to-night."

A loud laugh from the bystanders, and a glance in the mirror,

caused Jenks to open his eyes to the ludicrous appearance he cut with a single whisker, and he began to insist upon my taking the whole of my property. But all wouldn't do. I had a right to take it when I chose; I was not obliged to take it all at once; and I chose to take but half at that particular period: indeed, I intimated to him very plainly that I was not going to be a very hard creditor, and that if he "behaved himself," perhaps I should *never* call for the balance of what he owed me.

When Jenks became convinced I was determined not to take the remaining whisker, he began, amidst the loudly-expressed mirth of the crowd, to propose terms of compromise,—first offering me ten dollars, then twenty, thirty, ~~forty~~, fifty, to take off the remaining whisker. I said, firmly, "My dear sir, there is no use talking: I insist on your wearing that whisker for me for a month or two."

"What will you take for the whiskers?" he at length asked. "Won't you sell them back to me?"

"Ah," replied I, "now you begin to talk as a business man should. Yes, I bought them on speculation: I'll sell them, if I can obtain a good price."

"What is your price?"

"One hundred dollars; *must* double my money."

"Nothing less?"

"Not a farthing less: and I'm not anxious to sell even at that price."

"Well, I'll take them," he groaned. "There's your money. And here, barber, shave off this d—d infernal whisker in less than no time. I shall be late at the ball."

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

1804-1864

THE BIRTHMARK

IN the latter part of the last century there lived a man of science, an eminent proficient in every branch of natural philosophy, who not long before our story opens had made experience of a spiritual affinity more attractive than any chemical one. He had left his laboratory to the care of an assistant, cleared his fine countenance from the furnace-smoke, washed the stain of acids from his fingers, and persuaded a beautiful woman to become his wife. In those days, when the comparatively recent discovery of electricity and other kindred mysteries of Nature seemed to open paths into the region of miracle, it was not unusual for the love of science to rival the love of woman in its depths and absorbing energy. The higher intellect, the imagination, the spirit, and even the heart might all find their congenial aliment in pursuits which, as some of their ardent votaries believed, would ascend from one step of powerful intelligence to another, until the philosopher should lay his hand on the secret of creative force and perhaps make new worlds for himself. We know not whether Aylmer possessed this degree of faith in man's ultimate control over Nature. He had devoted himself, however, too unreservedly to scientific studies ever to be weakened from them by any second passion. His love for his young wife might prove the stronger of the two; but it could only be by intertwining itself with his love of science and uniting the strength of the latter to his own.

Such a union accordingly took place, and was attended with truly remarkable consequences and a deeply impressive moral. One day, very soon after their marriage, Aylmer sat gazing at his wife with a trouble in his countenance that grew stronger until he spoke.

"Georgiana," said he, "has it never occurred to you that the mark upon your cheek might be removed?"

"No, indeed," said she, smiling; but, perceiving the seriousness of his manner, she blushed deeply. "To tell you the truth, it has been so often called a charm, that I was simple enough to imagine it might be so."

"Ah, upon another face perhaps it might," replied her husband ; "but never on yours. No, dearest Georgiana, you came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature, that this slightest possible defect, which we hesitate whether to term a defect or a beauty, shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection.

"Shocks you, my husband !" cried Georgiana, deeply hurt ; at first reddening with momentary anger, but then bursting into tears. "Then why did you take me from my mother's side ? You cannot love what shocks you !"

To explain this conversation, it must be mentioned that in the centre of Georgiana's left cheek there was a singular mark, deeply interwoven, as it were, with the texture and substance of her face. In the usual state of her complexion—a healthy though delicate bloom—the mark wore a tint of deeper crimson, which imperfectly defined its shape amid the surrounding rosiness. When she blushed it gradually became more indistinct, and finally vanished amid the triumphant rush of blood that bathed the whole cheek with its brilliant glow. But if any shifting motion caused her to turn pale there was the mark again, a crimson stain upon the snow, in what Aylmer sometimes deemed an almost fearful distinctness. Its shape bore not a little similiarity to the human hand, though of the smallest pigmy size. Georgiana's lovers were wonted to say that some fairy at her birth-hour had laid her tiny hand upon the infant's cheek, and left this impress there in token of the magic endowments that were to give her such sway over all hearts. Many a desperate swain would have risked life for the privilege of pressing his lips to the mysterious hand. It must not be concealed, however, that the impression wrought by this fairy sign-manual varied exceedingly according to the difference of temperament in the beholders. Some fastidious persons—but they were exclusively of her own sex—affirmed that the bloody hand, as they chose to call it, quite destroyed the effect of Georgiana's beauty and rendered her countenance even hideous. But it would be as reasonable to say that one of those small blue stains which sometimes occur in the purest statuary marble would convert the *Eve* of Powers to a monster. Masculine observers, if the birthmark did not heighten their admiration, contented themselves with wishing it away, that the world might possess one living specimen of ideal loveliness without the semblance of a flaw. After his marriage—for he thought little or nothing of the matter before—Aylmer discovered that this was the case with himself.

Had she been less beautiful—if Envy's self could have found aught else to sneer at—he might have felt his affection heightened by the prettiness of this mimic hand, now vaguely portrayed, now lost, now stealing forth again and glimmering to and fro with every

pulse of emotion that throbbed within her heart ; but, seeing her otherwise so perfect, he found this one defect grow more and more intolerable with every moment of their united lives. It was the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature, in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions, either to imply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by toil and pain. The crimson hand expressed the ineludible gripe in which mortality clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to the dust. In this manner, selecting it as the symbol of his wife's liability to sin, sorrow, decay, and death, Aylmer's sombre imagination was not long in rendering the birthmark a frightful object, causing him more trouble and horror than ever Georgiana's beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight.

At all the seasons which should have been their happiest he invariably, and without intending it, nay, in spite of a purpose to the contrary, reverted to this one disastrous topic. Trifling as it at first appeared, it so connected itself with innumerable trains of thought and modes of feeling that it became the central point of all. With the morning twilight Aylmer opened his eyes upon his wife's face and recognised the symbol of imperfection ; and when they sat together at the evening hearth his eyes wandered stealthily to her cheek, and beheld, flickering with the blaze of the wood-fire, the spectral hand that wrote mortality where he would fain have worshipped. Georgiana soon learned to shudder at his gaze. It needed but a glance with the peculiar expression that his face often wore to change the roses of her cheek into a deathlike paleness, amid which the crimson hand was brought strongly out, like a bas-relief of ruby on the whitest marble.

Late one night, when the lights were growing dim so as hardly to betray the stain on the poor wife's cheek, she herself, for the first time, voluntarily took up the subject.

"Do you remember, my dear Aylmer," said she, with a feeble attempt at a smile, "have you any recollection of a dream last night about this odious hand ?"

"None ! none whatever !" replied Aylmer, starting ; but then he added, in a dry, cold tone, affected for the sake of concealing the real depth of his emotion, "I might well dream of it ; for, before I fell asleep, it had taken a pretty firm hold of my fancy."

"And you did dream of it ?" continued Georgiana, hastily ; for she dreaded lest a gush of tears should interrupt what she had to say. "A terrible dream ! I wonder that you can forget it. Is it possible to forget this one expression ?—It is in her heart now ;

we must have it out ! ' Reflect, my husband ; for by all means I would have you recall that dream."

The mind is in a sad state when Sleep, the all-involving, cannot confine her spectres within the dim region of her sway, but suffers them to break forth, affrighting this actual life with secrets that perchance belong to a deeper one. Aylmer now remembered his dream. He had fancied himself with his servant Aminadab attempting an operation for the removal of the birthmark ; but the deeper went the knife, the deeper sank the hand, until at length its tiny grasp appeared to have caught hold of Georgiana's heart ; whence, however, her husband was inexorably resolved to cut or wrench it away.

When the dream had shaped itself perfectly in his memory, Aylmer sat in his wife's presence with a guilty feeling. Truth often finds its way to the mind close-muffled in robes of sleep, and then speaks with uncompromising directness of matters in regard to which we practise an unconscious self-deception during our waking moments. Until now he had not been aware of the tyrannising influence acquired by one idea over his mind, and of the lengths which he might find in his heart to go for the sake of giving himself peace.

" Aylmer," resumed Georgiana, solemnly, " I know not what may be the cost to both of us to rid me of this fatal birthmark. Perhaps its removal may cause cureless deformity ; or it may be the stain goes as deep as life itself. Again : do we know that there is a possibility, on any terms, of unclasping the firm gripe of this little hand which was laid upon me before I came into the world ? "

" Dearest Georgiana, I have spent much thought upon the subject," hastily interrupted Aylmer. " I am convinced of the perfect practicability of its removal."

" If there be the remotest possibility of it," continued Georgiana, " let the attempt be made, at whatever risk. Danger is nothing to me ; for life, while this hateful mark makes me the object of your horror and disgust—life is a burden which I would fling down with joy. Either remove this dreadful hand, or take my wretched life ! You have deep science. All the world bears witness to it. You have achieved great wonders. Cannot you remove this little, little mark, which I cover with the tips of two small fingers ? Is this beyond your power, for the sake of your own peace, and to save your poor wife from madness ? "

" Noblest, dearest, tenderest wife," cried Aylmer, rapturously, " doubt not my power. I have already given this matter the deepest thought—thought which might almost have enlightened me to create a being less perfect than yourself. Georgiana, you have led me deeper than ever into the heart of science. I feel myself fully

competent to render this dear cheek as faultless as its fellow ; and then, most beloved, what will be my triumph when I shall have corrected what Nature left imperfect in her fairest work ! Even Pygmalion, when his sculptured woman assumed life, felt not greater ecstasy than mine will be."

" It is resolved, then," said Georgiana, faintly smiling. " And Aylmer, spare me not, though you should find the birthmark take refuge in my heart at last."

Her husband tenderly kissed her cheek—her right cheek—not that which bore the impress of the crimson hand.

The next day Aylmer apprised his wife of a plan that he had formed whereby he might have opportunity for the intense thought and constant watchfulness which the proposed operation would require ; while Georgiana, likewise, would enjoy the perfect repose essential to its success. They were to seclude themselves in the extensive apartments occupied by Aylmer as a laboratory, and where, during his toilsome youth, he had made discoveries in the elemental powers of Nature that had roused the admiration of all the learned societies in Europe. Seated calmly in this laboratory, the pale philosopher had investigated the secrets of the highest cloud-region and of the profoundest mines ; he had satisfied himself of the causes that kindled and kept alive the fires of the volcano ; and had explained the mystery of fountains, and how it is that they gush forth, some so bright and pure, and others with such rich medicinal virtues, from the dark bosom of the earth. Here, too, at an earlier period, he had studied the wonders of the human frame, and attempted to fathom the very process by which Nature assimilates all her precious influences from earth and air, and from the spiritual world, to create and foster man, her masterpiece. The latter pursuit, however, Aylmer had long laid aside in unwilling recognition of the truth—against which all seekers sooner or later stumble—that our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own secrets, and, in spite of her pretended openness, shows us nothing but results. She permits us, indeed, to mar, but seldom to mend, and, like a jealous patentee, on no account to make. Now, however, Aylmer resumed these half-forgotten investigations ; not, of course, with such hopes or wishes as first suggested them, but because they involved much physiological truth and lay in the path of his proposed scheme for the treatment of Georgiana.

As he led her over the threshold of the laboratory Georgiana was cold and tremulous. Aylmer looked cheerfully into her face, with intent to reassure her, but was so startled with the intense glow of the birthmark upon the whiteness of her cheek, that he could not restrain a strong convulsive shudder. His wife fainted.

"Aminadab! Aminadab!" shouted Aylmer, stamping violently on the floor.

Forthwith there issued from an inner apartment a man of low stature, but bulky frame, with shaggy hair hanging about his visage, which was grimed with the vapours of the furnace. This personage had been Aylmer's underworker during his whole scientific career, and was admirably fitted for that office by his great mechanical readiness, and the skill with which, while incapable of comprehending a single principle, he executed all the details of his master's experiments. With his vast strength, his shaggy hair, his smoky aspect, and the indescribable earthiness that encrusted him, he seemed to represent man's physical nature; while Aylmer's slender figure, and pale, intellectual face, were no less apt a type of the spiritual element.

"Throw open the door of the boudoir, Aminadab," said Aylmer, "and burn a pastil."

"Yes, master," answered Aminadab, looking intently at the lifeless form of Georgiana; and then he muttered to himself, "If she were my wife, I'd never part with that birthmark."

When Georgiana recovered consciousness she found herself breathing an atmosphere of penetrating fragrance, the gentle potency of which had recalled her from her deathlike faintness. The scene around her looked like enchantment. Aylmer had converted those smoky, dingy, sombre rooms, where he had spent his brightest years in recondite pursuits, into a series of beautiful apartments not unfit to be the secluded abode of a lovely woman. The walls were hung with gorgeous curtains, which imparted the combination of grandeur and grace that no other species of adornment can achieve; and, as they fell from the ceiling to the floor, their rich and ponderous folds, concealing all angles and straight lines, appeared to shut in the scene from infinite space. For aught Georgiana knew, it might be a pavilion among the clouds. And Aylmer, excluding the sunshine, which would have interfered with his chemical processes, had supplied its place with perfumed lamps, emitting flames of various hue, but all uniting in a soft, empurpled radiance. He now knelt by his wife's side, watching her earnestly, but without alarm; for he was confident in his science, and felt that he could draw a magic circle round her within which no evil might intrude.

"Where am I? Ah, I remember," said Georgiana, faintly; and she placed her hand over her cheek to hide the terrible mark from her husband's eyes.

"Fear not, dearest!" exclaimed he. "Do not shrink from me! Believe me, Georgiana, I even rejoice in this single imperfection, since it will be such a rapture to remove it."

"O spare me!" sadly replied his wife. "Pray do not look at it again. I never can forget that convulsive shudder."

In order to soothe Georgiana, and, as it were, to release her mind from the burden of actual things, Aylmer now put in practice some of the light and playful secrets which science had taught him among its profounder lore. Airy figures, absolutely bodiless ideas, and forms of unsubstantial beauty came and danced before her, imprinting their momentary footsteps on beams of light. Though she had some indistinct idea of the method of these optical phenomena, still the illusion was almost perfect enough to warrant the belief that her husband possessed sway over the spiritual world. Then again, when she felt a wish to look forth from her seclusion, immediately, as if her thoughts were answered, the procession of external existence flitted across a screen. The scenery and the figures of actual life were perfectly represented but with that bewitching yet indescribable difference which always makes a picture, an image, or a shadow, so much more attractive than the original. When wearied of this, Aylmer bade her cast her eyes upon a vessel containing a quantity of earth. She did so, with little interest at first; but was soon startled to perceive the germ of a plant shooting upward from the soil. Then came the slender stalk; the leaves gradually unfolded themselves; and amid them was a perfect and lovely flower.

"It is magical!" cried Georgiana. "I dare not touch it."

"Nay, pluck it," answered Aylmer—"pluck it, and inhale its brief perfume while you may. The flower will wither in a few moments and leave nothing save its brown seed-vessels; but thence may be perpetuated a race as ephemeral as itself."

But Georgiana had no sooner touched the flower than the whole plant suffered a blight, its leaves turning coal-black as if by the agency of fire.

"There was too powerful a stimulus," said Aylmer, thoughtfully.

To make up for this abortive experiment, he proposed to take her portrait by a scientific process of his own invention. It was to be effected by rays of light striking upon a polished plate of metal. Georgiana assented; but, on looking at the result, was affrighted to find the features of the portrait blurred and indefinable; while the minute figure of a hand appeared where the cheek should have been. Aylmer snatched the metallic plate and threw it into a jar of corrosive acid.

Soon, however, he forgot these mortifying failures. In the intervals of study and chemical experiment he came to her flushed and exhausted, but seemed invigorated by her presence, and spoke in glowing language of the resources of his art. He gave a history of the long dynasty of the alchemists, who spent so many ages in

quest of the universal solvent by which the golden principle might be elicited from all things vile and base. Aylmer appeared to believe that, by the plainest scientific logic, it was altogether within the limits of possibility to discover this long-sought medium. "But," he added, "a philosopher who should go deep enough to acquire the power would attain too lofty a wisdom to stoop to the exercise of it." Not less singular were his opinions in regard to the elixir vitæ. He more than intimated that it was at his option to concoct a liquid that should prolong life for years, perhaps interminably; but that it would produce a discord in Nature which all the world, and chiefly the quaffer of the immortal nostrum, would find cause to curse.

"Aylmer, are you in earnest?" asked Georgiana, looking at him with amazement and fear. "It is terrible to possess such power, or even to dream of possessing it."

"O, do not tremble, my love," said her husband. "I would not wrong either you or myself by working such inharmonious effects upon our lives; but I would have you consider how trifling, in comparison, is the skill requisite to remove this little hand."

At the mention of the birthmark, Georgiana, as usual, shrank as if a red-hot iron had touched her cheek.

Again Aylmer applied himself to his labours. She could hear his voice in the distant furnace-room giving directions to Aminadab, whose harsh, uncouth, misshapen tones were audible in response, more like the grunt or growl of a brute than human speech. After hours of absence, Aylmer reappeared and proposed that she should now examine his cabinet of chemical products and natural treasures of the earth. Among the former he showed her a small vial, in which, he remarked, was contained a gentle yet most powerful fragrance, capable of impregnating all the breezes that blow across a kingdom. They were of inestimable value, the contents of that little vial; and, as he said so, he threw some of the perfume into the air and filled the room with piercing and invigorating delight.

"And what is this?" asked Georgiana, pointing to a small crystal globe containing a gold-coloured liquid. "It is so beautiful to the eye that I could imagine it the elixir of life."

"In one sense it is," replied Aylmer; "or rather, the elixir of immortality. It is the most precious poison that ever was concocted in this world. By its aid I could apportion the lifetime of any mortal at whom you might point your finger. The strength of the dose would determine whether he were to linger out years, or drop dead in the midst of a breath. No king on his guarded throne could keep his life if I, in my private station, should deem that the welfare of millions justified me in depriving him of it."

"Why do you keep such a terrific drug?" inquired Georgiana, in horror.

"Do not mistrust me, dearest," said her husband, smiling; "its virtuous potency is yet greater than its harmful one. But see! here is a powerful cosmetic. With a few drops of this in a vase of water, freckles may be washed away as easily as the hands are cleansed. A stronger infusion would take the blood out of the cheek, and leave the rosiest beauty a pale ghost."

"Is it with this lotion that you intend to bathe my cheek?" asked Georgiana, anxiously.

"O, no," hastily replied her husband; "this is merely superficial. Your case demands a remedy that shall go deeper."

In his interviews with Georgiana, Aylmer generally made minute inquiries as to her sensations, and whether the confinement of the rooms and the temperature of the atmosphere agreed with her. These questions had such a particular drift that Georgiana began to conjecture that she was already subjected to certain physical influences, either breathed in with the fragrant air or taken with her food. She fancied likewise, but it might be altogether fancy, that there was a stirring up of her system—a strange, indefinite sensation creeping through her veins, and tingling, half painfully, half pleasurably, at her heart. Still, whenever she dared to look into the mirror, there she beheld herself pale as a white rose and with the crimson birthmark stamped upon her cheek. Not even Aylmer now hated it so much as she.

To dispel the tedium of the hours which her husband found it necessary to devote to the processes of combination and analysis, Georgiana turned over the volumes of his scientific library. In many dark old tomes she met with chapters full of romance and poetry. They were the works of the philosophers of the Middle Ages, such as Albertus Magnus, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and the famous friar who created the prophetic Brazen Head. All these antique naturalists stood in advance of their centuries, yet were imbued with some of their credulity, and therefore were believed, and perhaps imagined themselves to have acquired from the investigation of Nature a power above Nature, and from physics a sway over the spiritual world. Hardly less curious and imaginative were the early volumes of the *Transactions* of the Royal Society, in which the members, knowing little of the limits of natural possibility, were continually recording wonders or proposing methods whereby wonders might be wrought.

But, to Georgiana, the most engrossing volume was a large folio from her husband's own hand, in which he had recorded every experiment of his scientific career, its original aim, the methods adopted for its development, and its final success or failure, with

the circumstances to which either event was attributable. The book, in truth, was both the history and emblem of his ardent, ambitious, imaginative, yet practical and laborious life. He handled physical details as if there were nothing beyond them; yet spiritualised them all, and redeemed himself from materialism by his strong and eager aspiration towards the infinite. In his grasp the veriest clod of earth assumed a soul. Georgiana, as she read, revered Aylmer and loved him more profoundly than ever, but with a less entire dependence on his judgment than heretofore. Much as he had accomplished, she could not but observe that his most splendid successes were almost invariably failures, if compared with the ideal at which he aimed. His brightest diamonds were the merest pebbles, and felt to be so by himself, in comparison with the inestimable gems which lay hidden beyond his reach. The volume, rich with achievements that had won renown for its author, was yet as melancholy a record as ever mortal hand had penned. It was the sad confession and continual exemplification of the shortcomings of the composite man, the spirit burdened with clay and working in matter, and of the despair that assails the higher nature at finding itself so miserably thwarted by the earthly part. Perhaps every man of genius, in whatever sphere, might recognise the image of his own experience in Aylmer's journal.

So deeply did these reflections affect Georgiana that she laid her face upon the open volume and burst into tears. In this situation she was found by her husband.

"It is dangerous to read in a sorcerer's books," said he with a smile, though his countenance was uneasy and displeased. "Georgiana, there are pages in that volume which I can scarcely glance over and keep my senses. Take heed lest it prove as detrimental to you."

"It has made me worship you more than ever," said she.

"Ah, wait for this one success," rejoined he, "then worship me if you will. I shall deem myself hardly unworthy of it. But come, I have sought you for the luxury of your voice. Sing to me, dearest."

So she poured out the liquid music of her voice to quench the thirst of his spirit. He then took his leave with a boyish exuberance of gaiety, assuring her that her seclusion would endure but a little longer, and that the result was already certain. Scarcely had he departed when Georgiana felt irresistibly impelled to follow him. She had forgotten to inform Aylmer of a symptom which for two or three hours past had begun to excite her attention. It was a sensation in the fatal birthmark, not painful, but which induced a restlessness throughout her system. Hastening after her husband, she intruded for the first time into the laboratory.

The first thing that struck her eye was the furnace, that hot and feverish worker, with the intense glow of its fire, which by the quantities of soot clustered above it seemed to have been burning for ages. There was a distilling apparatus in full operation. Around the room were retorts, tubes, cylinders, crucibles, and other apparatus of chemical research. An electrical machine stood ready for immediate use. The atmosphere felt oppressively close, and was tainted with gaseous odours which had been tormented forth by the processes of science. The severe and homely simplicity of the apartment, with its naked walls and brick pavement, looked strange, accustomed as Georgiana had become to the fantastic elegance of her boudoir. But what chiefly, indeed almost solely, drew her attention was the aspect of Aylmer himself.

He was pale as death, anxious and absorbed, and hung over the furnace as if it depended upon his utmost watchfulness whether the liquid which it was distilling should be the draught of immortal happiness or misery. How different from the sanguine and joyous mien that he had assumed for Georgiana's encouragement!

"Carefully now, Aminadab; carefully, thou human machine; carefully, thou man of clay," muttered Aylmer, more to himself than his assistant. "Now, if there be a thought too much or too little, it is all over."

"Ho! ho!" mumbled Aminadab. "Look, master! look!"

Aylmer raised his eyes hastily, and at first reddened, then grew paler than ever, on beholding Georgiana. He rushed towards her and seized her arm with a grip that left the print of his fingers upon it.

"Why do you come hither? Have you no trust in your husband?" cried he, impetuously. "Would you throw the blight of that fatal birthmark over my labours? It is not well done. Go, prying woman! go!"

"Nay, Aylmer," said Georgiana, with the firmness of which she possessed no stinted endowment, "it is not you that have a right to complain. You mistrust your wife; you have concealed the anxiety with which you watch the development of this experiment. Think not so unworthily of me, my husband. Tell me all the risk we run, and fear not that I shall shrink; for my share in it is far less than your own."

"No, no, Georgiana!" said Aylmer, impatiently; "it must not be."

"I submit," replied she, calmly. "And, Aylmer, I shall quaff whatever draught you bring me; but it will be on the same principle that would induce me to take a dose of poison if offered by your hand."

"My noble wife," said Aylmer, deeply moved, "I knew not the

height and depth of your nature until now. Nothing shall be concealed. Know, then, that this crimson hand, superficial as it seems, has clutched its grasp into your being with a strength of which I had no previous conception. I have already administered agents powerful enough to do aught except to change your entire physical system. Only one thing remains to be tried. If that fail us we are ruined."

"Why did you hesitate to tell me this?" asked she.

"Because, Georgiana," said Aylmer, in a low voice, "there is danger."

"Danger? There is but one danger—that this horrible stigma shall be left upon my cheek!" cried Georgiana. "Remove it, remove it, whatever be the cost, or we shall both go mad!"

"Heaven knows your words are too true," said Aylmer, sadly. "And now, dearest, return to your boudoir. In a little while all will be tested."

He conducted her back and took leave of her with a solemn tenderness which spoke far more than his words how much was now at stake. After his departure Georgiana became rapt in musings. She considered the character of Aylmer, and did it complete justice than at any previous moment. Her heart exulted, while it trembled, at his honourable love—so pure and lofty that it would accept nothing less than perfection, nor miserably make itself contented with an earthlier nature than he had dreamed of. She felt how much more precious was such a sentiment than that meaner kind which would have borne with the imperfection for her sake, and have been guilty of treason to holy love by degrading its perfect idea to the level of the actual; and with her whole spirit she prayed that, for a single moment, she might satisfy his highest and deepest conception. Longer than one moment she well knew it could not be; for his spirit was ever on the march, ever ascending, and each instant required something that was beyond the scope of the instant before.

The sound of her husband's footsteps aroused her. He bore a crystal goblet containing a liquor colourless as water, but bright enough to be the draught of immortality. Aylmer was pale; but it seemed rather the consequence of a highly-wrought state of mind and tension of spirit than of fear or doubt.

"The concoction of the draught has been perfect," said he, in answer to Georgiana's look. "Unless all my science have deceived me, it cannot fail."

"Save on your account, my dearest Aylmer," observed his wife, "I might wish to put off this birthmark of mortality by relinquishing mortality itself in preference to any other mode. Life is but a sad possession to those who have attained precisely the degree of moral

advancement at which I stand. Were I weaker and blinder, it might be happiness. Were I stronger, it might be endured hopefully. But, being what I find myself, methinks I am of all mortals the most fit to die."

"You are fit for heaven without tasting death!" replied her husband. "But why do we speak of dying? The draught cannot fail. Behold its effect upon this plant."

On the window-seat there stood a geranium diseased with yellow blotches, which had overspread all its leaves. Aylmer poured a small quantity of the liquid upon the soil in which it grew. In a little time, when the roots of the plant had taken up the moisture, the unsightly blotches began to be extinguished in a living verdure.

"There needed no proof," said Georgiana, quietly. "Give me the goblet. I joyfully stake all upon your word."

"Drink, then, thou lofty creature!" exclaimed Aylmer, with fervid admiration. "There is no taint of imperfection on thy spirit. Thy sensible frame, too, shall soon be all perfect."

She quaffed the liquid and returned the goblet to his hand.

"It is grateful," said she, with a placid smile. "Methinks it is like water from a heavenly fountain; for it contains I know not what of unobtrusive fragrance and deliciousness. It allays a feverish thirst that had parched me for many days. Now, dearest, let me sleep. My earthly senses are closing over my spirit like the leaves around the heart of a rose at sunset."

She spoke the last words with a gentle reluctance, as if it required almost more energy than she could command to pronounce the faint and lingering syllables. Scarcely had they loitered through her lips ere she was lost in slumber. Aylmer sat by her side, watching her aspect with the emotions proper to a man, the whole value of whose existence was involved in the process now to be tested. Mingled with this mood, however, was the philosophic investigation characteristic of the man of science. Not the minutest symptom escaped him. A heightened flush of the cheek, a slight irregularity of breath, a quiver of the eyelid, a hardly perceptible tremor through the frame—such were the details which, as the moments passed, he wrote down in his folio volume. Intense thought had set its stamp upon every previous page of that volume; but the thoughts of years were all concentrated upon the last.

While thus employed, he failed not to gaze often at the fatal hand, and not without a shudder. Yet once, by a strange and unaccountable impulse, he pressed it with his lips. His spirit recoiled, however, in the very act; and Georgiana, out of the midst of her deep sleep, moved uneasily and murmured, as if in remonstrance. Again Aylmer resumed his watch. Nor was it without avail. The crimson hand, which at first had been strongly visible upon the

marble paleness of Georgiana's cheek, now grew more faintly outlined. She remained not less pale than ever; but the birthmark, with every breath that came and went, lost somewhat of its former distinctness. Its presence had been awful; its departure was more awful still. Watch the stain of the rainbow fading out of the sky, and you will know how that mysterious symbol passed away.

"By Heaven! it is well-nigh gone!" said Aylmer to himself, in almost irrepressible ecstasy. "I can scarcely trace it now. Success! success! And now it is like the faintest rose-colour. The lightest flush of blood across her cheek would overcome it. But she is so pale!"

He drew aside the window-curtain and suffered the light of natural day to fall into the room and rest upon her cheek. At the same time he heard a gross, hoarse chuckle, which he had long known as his servant Aminadab's expression of delight.

"Ah, clod! ah, earthly mass!" cried Aylmer, laughing in a sort of frenzy, "you have served me well! Matter and spirit—earth and heaven—have both done their part in this! Laugh, thing of the senses! You have earned the right to laugh."

These exclamations broke Georgiana's sleep. She slowly unclosed her eyes and gazed into the mirror which her husband had arranged for that purpose. A faint smile flitted over her lips when she recognised how barely perceptible was now that crimson hand which had once blazed forth with such disastrous brilliancy as to scare away all their happiness. But then her eyes sought Aylmer's face with a trouble and anxiety that he could by no means account for.

"My poor Aylmer!" murmured she.

"Poor? Nay, richest, happiest, most favoured!" exclaimed he. "My peerless bride, it is successful! You are perfect!"

"My poor Aylmer," she repeated, with a more than human tenderness, "you have aimed loftily; you have done nobly. Do not repent that, with so high and pure a feeling, you have rejected the best the earth could offer. Aylmer, dearest Aylmer, I am dying!"

Alas! it was too true! The fatal hand had grappled with the mystery of life, and was the bond by which an angelic spirit kept itself in union with a mortal frame. As the last crimson tint of the birthmark—that sole token of human imperfection—faded from her cheek, the parting breath of the now perfect woman passed in the atmosphere, and her soul, lingering a moment near her husband, took its heavenward flight. Then a hoarse, chuckling laugh was heard again! Thus ever does the gross fatality of earth exult in its invariable triumph over the immortal essence which, in this dim sphere of half-development, demands the completeness of a

higher state. Yet, had Aylmer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the self-same texture with the celestial. The momentary circumstance was too strong for him ; he failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and, living once for all in eternity, to find the perfect future in the present.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

THE GREAT STONE FACE

ONE afternoon, when the sun was going down, a mother and her little boy sat at the door of their cottage, talking about the Great Stone Face. They had but to lift their eyes, and there it was plainly to be seen, though miles away, with the sunshine brightening all its features

And what was the Great Stone Face?

Embosomed among a family of lofty mountains, there was a valley so spacious that it contained many thousand inhabitants. Some of these good people dwelt in log-huts, with the black forests all around them on the steep and difficult hillsides. Others had their homes in comfortable farmhouses, and cultivated the rich soil on the gentle slopes or level surfaces of the valley. Others, again, were congregated into populous villages, where some wild, highland rivulet, tumbling down from its birthplace in the upper mountain region, had been caught and tamed by human cunning, and compelled to turn the machinery of cotton factories. The inhabitants of this valley, in short, were numerous, and of many modes of life. But all of them, grown people and children, had a kind of familiarity with the Great Stone Face, although some possessed the gift of distinguishing this grand natural phenomenon more perfectly than many of their neighbours.

The Great Stone Face, then, was a work of Nature in her mood of majestic playfulness, formed on the perpendicular side of a mountain by some immense rocks, which had been thrown together in such a position as, when viewed at a proper distance, precisely to resemble the features of the human countenance. It seemed as if an enormous giant, or a Titan, had sculptured his own likeness on the precipice. There was the broad arch of the forehead, a hundred feet in height; the nose, with its long bridge; and the vast lips, which, if they could have spoken, would have rolled their thunder accents from one end of the valley to the other. True it is, that if the spectator approached too near he lost the outline of the gigantic visage, and could discern only a heap of ponderous and

gigantic rocks, piled in chaotic ruin one upon another, Retracing his steps, however, the wondrous features would again be seen ; and the farther he withdrew from them, the more like a human face, with all its original divinity intact, did they appear ; until as it grew dim in the distance, with the clouds and glorified vapour of the mountains clustering about it, the Great Stone Face seemed positively to be alive.

It was a happy lot for children to grow up to manhood or womanhood with the Great Stone Face before their eyes, for all the features were noble, and the expression was at once grand and sweet, as if it were the glow of a vast, warm heart, that embraced all mankind in its affections, and had room for more. It was an education only to look at it. According to the belief of many people, the valley owed much of its fertility to this benign aspect that was continually beaming over it, illuminating the clouds, and infusing its tenderness into the sunshine.

As we began with saying, a mother and her little boy sat at their cottage door, gazing at the Great Stone Face, and talking about it. The child's name was Ernest.

"Mother," said he, while the Titanic visage smiled on him, "I wish that it could speak, for it looks so very kindly that its voice must needs be pleasant. If I were to see a man with such a face I should love him dearly."

"If an old prophecy should come to pass," answered his mother, "we may see a man, some time or other, with exactly such a face as that."

"What prophecy do you mean, dear mother ?" eagerly inquired Ernest. "Pray tell me all about it !"

So his mother told him a story that her own mother had told to her, when she herself was younger than little Ernest ; a story, not of things that were past, but of what was yet to come ; a story, nevertheless, so very old that even the Indians, who formerly inhabited this valley, had heard it from their forefathers, to whom, as they affirmed, it had been murmured by the mountain streams, and whispered by the wind among the tree-tops. The purport was that, at some future day, a child should be born hereabouts who was destined to become the greatest and noblest personage of his time, and whose countenance, in manhood, should bear an exact resemblance to the Great Stone Face. Not a few old-fashioned people, and young ones likewise, in the ardour of their hopes, still cherished an enduring faith in this old prophecy. But others, who had seen more of the world, had watched and waited till they were weary, and had beheld no man with such a face, nor any man that proved to be much greater or nobler than his neighbours, concluded it to be nothing but an idle tale. At all events, the great man of the prophecy had not yet appeared.

"Oh, mother, dear mother!" cried Ernest, clapping his hands above his head, "I do hope that I shall live to see him!"

His mother was an affectionate and thoughtful woman, and felt that it was wisest not to discourage the generous hopes of her little boy. So she only said to him, "Perhaps you may."

And Ernest never forgot the story that his mother told him. It was always in his mind, whenever he looked upon the Great Stone Face. He spent his childhood in the log-cottage where he was born, and was dutiful to his mother, and helpful to her in many things, assisting her much with his little hands, and more with his loving heart. In this manner, from a happy yet often pensive child, he grew up to be a mild, quiet, unobtrusive boy, and sun-browned with labour in the fields, but with more intelligence brightening his aspect than is seen in many lads who have been taught at famous schools. Yet Ernest had had no teacher, save only that the Great Stone Face became one to him. When the toil of the day was over, he would gaze at it for hours, until he began to imagine that those vast features recognised him and gave him a smile of kindness and encouragement, responsive to his own look of veneration. We must not take upon us to affirm that this was a mistake, although the Face may have looked no more kindly at Ernest than at all the world besides. But the secret was that the boy's tender and confiding simplicity discerned what other people could not see; and thus the love, which was meant for all, became his peculiar portion.

About this time there went a rumour throughout the valley that the great man, foretold from ages long ago, who was to bear a resemblance to the Great Stone Face had appeared at last. It seems that, many years before, a young man had migrated from the valley and settled at a distant seaport, where, after getting together a little money, he had set up as a shopkeeper. His name—but I could never learn whether it was his real one, or a nickname that had grown out of his habits and success in life—was Gathergold. Being shrewd and active, and endowed by Providence with that inscrutable faculty which develops itself in what the world calls luck, he became an exceedingly rich merchant, and owner of a whole fleet of bulky-bottomed ships. All the countries of the globe appeared to join hands for the mere purpose of adding heap after heap to the mountainous accumulation of this one man's wealth. The cold regions of the north, almost within the gloom and shadow of the Arctic Circle, sent him their tribute in the shape of furs; hot Africa sifted for him the golden sand of her rivers, and gathered up the ivory tusks of her great elephants out of the forests; the East came bringing him the rich shawls, and spices, and teas, and the effulgence of diamonds, and the gleaming purity of large pearls.

The ocean, not to be behindhand with the earth, yielded up her mighty whales, that Mr. Gathergold might sell their oil, and make a profit on it. Be the original commodity what it might, it was gold within his grasp. It might be said of him, as of Midas in the fable, that whatever he touched with his finger immediately glistened, and grew yellow, and was changed at once into sterling metal, or, which suited him still better, into piles of coin. And when Mr. Gathergold had become so very rich that it would have taken him a hundred years only to count his wealth, he bethought himself of his native valley, and resolved to go back thither, and end his days where he was born. With this purpose in view, he sent a skilful architect to build him such a palace as should be fit for a man of his vast wealth to live in.

As I have said above, it had already been rumoured in the valley that Mr. Gathergold had turned out to be the prophetic personage so long and vainly looked for, and that his visage was the perfect and undeniable similitude of the Great Stone Face. People were the more ready to believe that this must needs be the fact when they beheld the splendid edifice that rose, as if by enchantment, on the site of his father's old weather-beaten farmhouse. The exterior was of marble, so dazzlingly white that it seemed as though the whole structure might melt away in the sunshine, like those humbler ones which Mr. Gathergold, in his young play-days, before his fingers were gifted with the touch of transmutation, had been accustomed to build of snow. It had a richly ornamental portico, supported by tall pillars, beneath which was a lofty door, studded with silver knobs, and made of a kind of variegated wood that had been brought from beyond the sea. The windows, from the floor to the ceiling of each stately apartment, were composed, respectively, of but one enormous pane of glass, so transparently pure that it was said to be a finer medium than even the vacant atmosphere. Hardly anybody had been permitted to see the interior of this palace; but it was reported, and with good semblance of truth, to be far more gorgeous than the outside, insomuch that whatever was iron or brass in other houses was silver or gold in this; and Mr. Gathergold's bedchamber, especially, made such a glittering appearance that no ordinary man would have been able to close his eyes there. But, on the other hand, Mr. Gathergold was now so inured to wealth that perhaps he could not have closed his eyes unless where the gleam of it was certain to find its way beneath his eyelids.

In due time the mansion was finished; next came the upholsterers, with magnificent furniture; then, a whole troop of black and white servants, the harbingers of Mr. Gathergold, who, in his own majestic person, was expected to arrive at sunset. Our friend Ernest, meanwhile, had been deeply stirred by the idea that the great man,

the noble man, the man of prophecy, after so many ages of delay, was at length to be made manifest to his native valley. He knew, boy as he was, that there were a thousand ways in which Mr. Gathergold, with his vast wealth, might transform himself into an angel of beneficence, and assume a control over human affairs as wide and benignant as the smile of the Great Stone Face. Full of faith and hope, Ernest doubted not that what the people said was true, and that now he was to behold the living likeness of those wondrous features on the mountain-side. While the boy was still gazing up the valley, and fancying, as he always did, that the Great Stone Face returned his gaze and looked kindly at him, the rumbling of wheels was heard, approaching swiftly along the winding road.

"Here he comes!" cried a group of people who were assembled to witness the arrival. "Here comes the great Mr. Gathergold!"

A carriage, drawn by four horses, dashed round the turn of the road. Within it, thrust partly out of the window, appeared the physiognomy of the old man, with a skin as yellow as if his own Midas hand had transmuted it. He had a low forehead, small, sharp eyes, puckered about with innumerable wrinkles, and very thin lips, which he made still thinner by pressing them forcibly together.

"The very image of the Great Stone Face!" shouted the people. "Sure enough, the old prophecy is true; and here we have the great man come at last!"

And, what greatly perplexed Ernest, they seemed actually to believe that here was the likeness which they spoke of. By the roadside there chanced to be an old beggar-woman and two little beggar-children, stragglers from some far-off region, who, as the carriage rolled onward, held out their hands and lifted up their doleful voices, most piteously beseeching charity. A yellow claw—the very same that had clawed together so much wealth—poked itself out of the coach-window, and dropped some copper coins upon the ground; so that, though the great man's name seems to have been Gathergold, he might just as suitably have been nicknamed Scattercopper. Still, nevertheless, with an earnest shout, and evidently with as much good faith as ever, the people bellowed:

"He is the very image of the Great Stone Face!"

But Ernest turned sadly from the wrinkled shrewdness of that sordid visage, and gazed up the valley, where, amid a gathering mist, gilded by the last sunbeams, he could still distinguish those glorious features which had impressed themselves into his soul. Their aspect cheered him. What did the benign lips seem to say?

"He will come! Fear not, Ernest; the man will come!"

The years went on, and Ernest ceased to be a boy. He had grown to be a young man now. He attracted little notice from the

other inhabitants of the valley ; for they saw nothing remarkable in his way of life, save that, when the labour of the day was over, he still loved to go apart and gaze and meditate upon the Great Stone Face. According to their idea of the matter, it was a folly, indeed, but pardonable, inasmuch as Ernest was industrious, kind, and neighbourly, and neglected no duty for the sake of indulging this idle habit. They knew not that the Great Stone Face had become a teacher to him and that the sentiment which was expressed in it would enlarge the young man's heart, and fill it with wider and deeper sympathies than other hearts. They knew not that thence would come a better wisdom than could be learned from books, and a better life than could be moulded on the defaced example of other human lives. Neither did Ernest know that the thoughts and affections which came to him so naturally, in the fields and at the fireside, and wherever he communed with himself, were of a higher tone than those which all men shared with him. A simple soul—simple as when his mother first taught him the old prophecy—he beheld the marvellous features beaming adown the valley, and still wondered that their human counterpart was so long in making his appearance.

By this time poor Mr. Gathergold was dead and buried ; and the oddest part of the matter was, that his wealth, which was the body and spirit of his existence, had disappeared before his death, leaving nothing of him but a living skeleton, covered over with a wrinkled, yellow skin. Since the melting away of his gold, it had been very generally conceded that there was no such striking resemblance, after all, betwixt the ignoble features of the ruined merchant and that majestic face upon the mountain-side. So the people ceased to honour him during his lifetime, and quietly consigned him to forgetfulness after his decease. Once in a while, it is true, his memory was brought up in connection with the magnificent palace which he had built, and which had long ago been turned into a hotel for the accommodation of strangers, multitudes of whom came, every summer, to visit that famous natural curiosity, the Great Stone Face. Thus, Mr. Gathergold being discredited and thrown into the shade, the man of prophecy was yet to come.

It so happened that a native-born son of the valley, many years before, had enlisted as a soldier, and, after a great deal of hard fighting, had now become an illustrious commander. Whatever he may be called in history, he was known in camps and on the battlefield under the nickname of Old Blood-and-Thunder. This war-worn veteran, being now infirm with age and wounds, and weary of the turmoil of a military life, and of the roll of the drum and the clangour of the trumpet, that had so long been ringing in his ears, had lately signified a purpose of returning to his native valley,

hoping to find repose where he remembered to have left it. The inhabitants, his old neighbours and their grown-up children, were resolved to welcome the renowned warrior with a salute of cannon and a public dinner ; and all the more enthusiastically, it being affirmed that now, at last, the likeness of the Great Stone Face had actually appeared. An aide-de-camp of Old Blood-and-Thunder, travelling through the valley, was said to have been struck with the resemblance. Moreover, the schoolmates and early acquaintances of the general were ready to testify, on oath, that, to the best of their recollection, the aforesaid general had been exceedingly like the majestic image, even when a boy, only that the idea had never occurred to them at that period. Great, therefore, was the excitement throughout the valley ; and many people, who had never once thought of glancing at the Great Stone Face for years before, now spent their time in gazing at it, for the sake of knowing exactly how General Blood-and-Thunder looked.

On the day of the great festival, Ernest, with all the other people of the valley, left their work, and proceeded to the spot where the sylvan banquet was prepared. As he approached, the loud voice of the Rev. Dr. Battleblast was heard, beseeching a blessing on the good things set before them, and on the distinguished friend of peace in whose honour they were assembled. The tables were arranged in a cleared space of the woods, shut in by the surrounding trees, except where a vista opened eastward, and afforded a distant view of the Great Stone Face. Over the general's chair, which was a relic from the home of Washington, there was an arch of verdant boughs, with the laurel profusely intermixed, and surmounted by his country's banner, beneath which he had won his victories. Our friend Ernest raised himself on his tiptoes, in hopes to get a glimpse of the celebrated guest ; but there was a mighty crowd about the tables anxious to hear the toasts and speeches, and to catch any word that might fall from the general in reply ; and a volunteer company, doing duty as a guard, pricked ruthlessly with their bayonets at any particularly quiet person among the throng. So Ernest, being of an unobtrusive character, was thrust quite into the background, where he could see no more of Old Blood-and-Thunder's physiognomy than if it had been still blazing on the battlefield. To console himself, he turned toward the Great Stone Face, which, like a faithful and long-remembered friend, looked back and smiled upon him through the vista of the forest. Meantime, however, he could overhear the remarks of various individuals, who were comparing the features of the hero with the face on the distant mountain-side.

" 'Tis the same face, to a hair ! " cried one man, cutting a caper for joy.

" Wonderfully like, that's a fact ! " responded another.

"Like! why, I call it Old Blood-and-Thunder himself, in a monstrous looking-glass!" cried a third. "And why not? He's the greatest man of this or any other age, beyond a doubt."

And then all three of the speakers gave a great shout, which communicated electricity to the crowd, and called forth a roar from a thousand voices that went reverberating for miles among the mountains, until you might have supposed that the Great Stone Face had poured its thunder-breath into the cry. All these comments, and this vast enthusiasm, served the more to interest our friend; nor did he think of questioning that now, at length, the mountain-visage had found its human counterpart. It is true, Ernest had imagined that this long-looked-for personage would appear in the character of a man of peace, uttering wisdom, and doing good, and making people happy. But, taking an habitual breadth of view, with all his simplicity, he contended that Providence should choose its own method of blessing mankind, and could conceive that this great end might be effected even by a warrior and a bloody sword, should inscrutable wisdom see fit to order matters so.

"The general! the general!" was now the cry. "Hush! silence! Old Blood-and-Thunder's going to make a speech."

Even so; for, the cloth being removed, the general's health had been drunk amid shouts of applause, and he now stood upon his feet to thank the company. Ernest saw him. There he was, over the shoulders of the crowd, from the two glittering epaulets and embroidered collar upward, beneath the arch of green boughs with intertwined laurel, and the banner drooping as if to shade his brow! And there, too, visible in the same glance, through the vista of the forest, appeared the Great Stone Face! And was there, indeed, such a resemblance as the crowd had testified? Alas, Ernest could not recognise it! He beheld a war-worn and weather-beaten countenance, full of energy, and expressive of an iron will; but the gentle wisdom, the deep, broad, tender sympathies, were altogether wanting in Old Blood-and-Thunder's visage; and even if the Great Stone Face had assumed his look of stern command, the milder traits would still have tempered it.

"This is not the man of prophecy," sighed Ernest to himself, as he made his way out of the throng. "And must the world wait longer yet?"

The mists had congregated about the distant mountain-side, and there were seen the grand and awful features of the Great Stone Face, awful but benignant, as if a mighty angel were sitting among the hills, and enrobing himself in a cloud-vesture of gold and purple. As he looked, Ernest could hardly believe but that a smile beamed over the whole visage, with a radiance still brightening, although without motion of the lips. It was probably the effect of the western

sunshine, melting through the thinly diffused vapours that had swept between him and the object that he gazed at. But—as it always did—the aspect of his marvellous friend made Ernest as hopeful as if he had never hoped in vain.

“Fear not, Ernest,” said his heart, even as if the Great Face were whispering to him—“fear not, Ernest; he will come.”

More years sped swiftly and tranquilly away. Ernest still dwelt in his native valley, and was now a man of middle age. By imperceptible degrees he had become known among the people. Now, as heretofore, he laboured for his bread, and was the same simple-hearted man that he had always been. But he had thought and felt so much, he had given so many of the best hours of his life to unworldly hopes for some great good to mankind, that it seemed as though he had been talking with the angels, and had imbibed a portion of their wisdom unawares. It was visible in the calm and well-considered beneficence of his daily life, the quiet stream of which had made a wide green margin all along its course. Not a day passed by that the world was not the better because this man, humble as he was, had lived. He never stepped aside from his own path, yet would always reach a blessing to his neighbour. Almost involuntarily, too, he had become a preacher. The pure and high simplicity of his thought, which, as one of its manifestations, took shape in the good deeds that dropped silently from his hand, flowed also forth in speech. He uttered truths that wrought upon and moulded the lives of those who heard him. His auditors, it may be, never suspected that Ernest, their own neighbour and familiar friend, was more than an ordinary man; least of all did Ernest himself suspect it; but, inevitably as the murmur of a rivulet, came thoughts out of his mouth that no other human lips had spoken.

When the people's minds had had a little time to cool, they were ready enough to acknowledge their mistake in imagining a similarity between General Blood-and-Thunder's truculent physiognomy and the benign visage on the mountain-side. But now, again, there were reports and many paragraphs in the newspapers, affirming that the likeness of the Great Stone Face had appeared upon the broad shoulders of a certain eminent statesman. He, like Mr. Gathergold and Old Blood-and-Thunder, was a native of the valley, but had left it in his early days, and taken up the trades of law and politics. Instead of the rich man's wealth and the warrior's sword, he had but a tongue, and it was mightier than both together. So wonderfully eloquent was he that whatever he might choose to say, his auditors had no choice but to believe him; wrong looked like right, and right like wrong; for when it pleased him he could make a kind of illuminated fog with his mere breath and obscure the natural daylight with it. His tongue, indeed, was a magic instrument:

sometimes it rumbled like the thunder ; sometimes it warbled like the sweetest music. It was the blast of war—the song of peace ; and it seemed to have a heart in it, when there was no such matter. In good truth, he was a wondrous man ; and when his tongue had acquired him all other imaginable success—when it had been heard in halls of state, and in the courts of princes and potentates—after it had made him known all over the world, even as a voice crying from shore to shore—it finally persuaded his countrymen to select him for the Presidency. Before this time—indeed, as soon as he began to grow celebrated—his admirers had found out the resemblance between him and the Great Stone Face ; and so much were they struck by it that throughout the country this distinguished gentleman was known by the name of Old Stony Phiz. The phrase was considered as giving a highly favourable aspect to his political prospects ; for, as is likewise the case with the Popedom, nobody ever becomes President without taking a name other than his own.

While his friends were doing their best to make him President, Old Stony Phiz, as he was called, set out on a visit to the valley where he was born. Of course, he had no other object than to shake hands with his fellow-citizens, and neither thought nor cared about any effect which his progress through the country might have upon the election. Magnificent preparations were made to receive the illustrious statesman ; a cavalcade of horsemen set forth to meet him at the boundary line of the State, and all the people left their business and gathered along the wayside to see him pass. Among these was Ernest. Though more than once disappointed, as we have seen, he had such a hopeful and confiding nature that he was always ready to believe in whatever seemed beautiful and good. He kept his heart continually open, and thus was sure to catch the blessing from on high when it should come. So now again, as buoyantly as ever, he went forth to behold the likeness of the Great Stone Face.

The cavalcade came prancing along the road, with a great clattering of hoofs and a mighty cloud of dust, which rose up so dense and high that the visage of the mountain-side was completely hidden from Ernest's eyes. All the great men of the neighbourhood were there on horseback ; militia officers in uniform ; the member of Congress ; the sheriff of the county ; the editors of newspapers ; and many a farmer, too, had mounted his patient steed, with his Sunday coat upon his back. It really was a very brilliant spectacle, especially as there were numerous banners flaunting over the cavalcade, on some of which were gorgeous portraits of the illustrious statesman and the Great Stone Face, smiling familiarly at one another, like two brothers. If the pictures were to be trusted, the mutual resemblance, it must be confessed, was marvellous. We

must not forget to mention that there was a band of music, which made the echoes of the mountains ring and reverberate with the loud triumph of its strains ; so that airy and soul-thrilling melodies broke out among all the heights and hollows, as if every nook of his native valley had found a voice to welcome the distinguished guest. But the grandest effect was when the far-off mountain precipice flung back the music ; for then the Great Stone Face itself seemed to be swelling the triumphant chorus, in acknowledgment that, at length, the man of prophecy was come.

All this while the people were throwing up their hats and shouting, with enthusiasm so contagious that the heart of Ernest kindled up, and he likewise threw up his hat, and shouted, as loudly as the loudest, " Huzza for the great man ! Huzza for Old Stony Phiz ! " But as yet he had not seen him.

" Here he is, now ! " cried those who stood near Ernest. " There ! There ! Look at Old Stony Phiz and then at the Old Man of the Mountain, and see if they are not as like as two twin-brothers ! "

In the midst of all this gallant array came an open barouche, drawn by four white horses ; and in the barouche, with his massive head uncovered, sat the illustrious statesman, Old Stony Phiz himself.

" Confess it," said one of Ernest's neighbours to him, " the Great Stone Face has met its match at last ! "

Now, it must be owned that, at his first glimpse of the countenance which was bowing and smiling from the barouche, Ernest did fancy that there was a resemblance between it and the old familiar face upon the mountain-side. The brow, with its massive depth and loftiness, and all the other features, indeed, were boldly and strongly hewn as if in emulation of a more than heroic, of a Titanic, model. But the sublimity and stateliness, the grand expression of a divine sympathy, that illuminated the mountain visage and etherealised its ponderous granite substance into spirit, might here be sought in vain. Something had been originally left out, or had departed. And therefore the marvellously gifted statesman had always a weary gloom in the deep caverns of his eyes, as of a child that has outgrown its playthings or a man of mighty faculties and little aims, whose life, with all its high performances, was vague and empty, because no high purpose had endowed it with reality.

Still Ernest's neighbour was thrusting his elbow into his side, and pressing him for an answer.

" Confess ! confess ! Is not he the very picture of your Old Man of the Mountain ? "

" No ! " said Ernest, bluntly, " I see little or no likeness."

" Then so much the worse for the Great Stone Face ! " answered his neighbour ; and again he set up a shout for Old Stony Phiz.

But Ernest turned away, melancholy, and almost despondent : for this was the saddest of his disappointments, to behold a man who might have fulfilled the prophecy and had not willed to do so. Meantime, the cavalcade, the banners, the music, and the barouches swept past him, with the vociferous crowd in the rear, leaving the dust to settle down, and the Great Stone Face to be revealed again, with the grandeur that it had worn for untold centuries.

"Lo, here I am, Ernest !" the benign lips seemed to say. "I have waited longer than thou, and am not yet weary. Fear not ; the man will come."

The years hurried onward, treading in their haste on one another's heels. And now they began to bring white hairs, and scatter them over the head of Ernest ; they made reverend wrinkles across his forehead and furrows in his cheeks. He was an aged man. But not in vain had he grown old : more than the white hairs on his head were the sage thoughts in his mind ; his wrinkles and furrows were inscriptions that Time had graved, and in which he had written legends of wisdom that had been tested by the tenor of a life. And Ernest had ceased to be obscure. Unsought for, undesired, had come the fame which so many seek, and made him known in the great world, beyond the limits of the valley in which he had dwelt so quietly. College professors, and even the active men of cities, came from afar to see and converse with Ernest ; for the report had gone abroad that this simple husbandman had ideas unlike those of other men, not gained from books, but of a higher tone—a tranquil and familiar majesty, as if he had been talking with the angels as his daily friends. Whether it were sage, statesman, or philanthropist, Ernest received these visitors with the gentle sincerity that had characterised him from boyhood, and spoke freely with them of whatever came uppermost, or lay deepest in his heart or their own. While they talked together, his face would kindle, unawares, and shine upon them, as with a mild evening light. Pensive with the fulness of such discourse, his guests took leave and went their way ; and passing up the valley, paused to look at the Great Stone Face, imagining that they had seen its likeness in a human countenance, but could not remember where.

While Ernest had been growing up and growing old, a bountiful Providence had granted a new poet to this earth. He, likewise, was a native of the valley, but had spent the greater part of his life at a distance from that romantic region, pouring out his sweet music amid the bustle and din of cities. Often, however, did the mountains which had been familiar to him in his childhood lift their snowy peaks into the clear atmosphere of his poetry. Neither was the Great Stone Face forgotten, for the poet had celebrated it in an ode, which was grand enough to have been uttered by its own majestic lips. This

man of genius, we may say, had come down from heaven with wonderful endowments. If he sang of a mountain, the eyes of all mankind beheld a mightier grandeur reposing on its breast, or soaring to its summit, than had before been seen there. If his theme were a lovely lake, a celestial smile had now been thrown over it, to gleam for ever on its surface. If it were the vast old sea, even the deep immensity of its dread bosom seemed to swell the higher, as if moved by the emotions of the song. Thus the world assumed another and a better aspect from the hour that the poet blessed it with his happy eyes. The Creator had bestowed him, as the last touch to His own handiwork. Creation was not finished till the poet came to interpret, and so complete it.

The effect was no less high and beautiful when his human brethren were the subject of his verse. The man or woman, sordid with the common dust of life, who crossed his daily path, and the little child who played in it, were glorified if he beheld them in his mood of poetic faith. He showed the golden links of the great chain that intertwined them with an angelic kindred; he brought out the hidden traits of a celestial birth that made them worthy of such kin. Some, indeed, there were who thought to show the soundness of their judgment by affirming that all the beauty and dignity of the natural world existed only in the poet's fancy. Let such men speak for themselves, who undoubtedly appear to have been spawned forth by Nature with a contemptuous bitterness; she having plastered them up out of her refuse stuff, after all the swine were made. As respects all things else, the poet's ideal was the truest truth.

The songs of this poet found their way to Ernest. He read them after his customary toil, seated on the bench before his cottage door, where for such a length of time he had filled his repose with thought by gazing at the Great Stone Face. And now as he read stanzas that caused the soul to thrill within him, he lifted his eyes to the vast countenance beaming on him so benignantly.

"Oh, majestic friend," he murmured, addressing the Great Stone Face, "is not this man worthy to resemble thee?"

The Face seemed to smile, but answered not a word.

Now it happened that the poet, though he dwelt so far away, had not only heard of Ernest, but had meditated much upon his character, until he deemed nothing so desirable as to meet this man, whose untaught wisdom walked hand in hand with the noble simplicity of his life. One summer morning, therefore, he took passage by the railroad, and, in the decline of the afternoon, alighted from the cars at no great distance from Ernest's cottage. The great hotel, which had formerly been the palace of Mr. Gathergold, was close at hand, but the poet with his carpet-bag on his arm, inquired at once where Ernest dwelt, and was resolved to be accepted as his guest.

Approaching the door, he there found the good old man, holding a volume in his hand, which alternately he read, and then, with a finger between the leaves, looked lovingly at the Great Stone Face.

"Good-evening," said the poet. "Can you give a traveller a night's lodging?"

"Willingly," answered Ernest; and then he added, smiling, "Methinks I never saw the Great Stone Face look so hospitably at a stranger."

The poet sat down on the bench beside him, and he and Ernest talked together. Often had the poet held intercourse with the wittiest and the wisest, but never before with a man like Ernest, whose thoughts and feelings gushed up with such a natural freedom, and who made great truths so familiar by his simple utterance of them. Angels, as had been so often said, seemed to have wrought with him at his labour in the fields; angels seemed to have sat with him by the fireside; and, dwelling with angels as friend with friends, he had imbibed the sublimity of their ideas, and imbued it with the sweet and lowly charm of household words. So thought the poet. And Ernest, on the other hand, was moved and agitated by the living images which the poet flung out of his mind, and which peopled all the air about the cottage door with shapes of beauty, both gay and pensive. The sympathies of these two men instructed them with a profounder sense than either could have attained alone. Their minds accorded into one strain, and made delightful music which neither of them could have claimed as all his own, nor distinguished his own share from the other's. They led one another, as it were, into a high pavilion of their thoughts, so remote, and hitherto so dim, that they had never entered it before, and so beautiful that they desired to be there always.

As Ernest listened to the poet, he imagined that the Great Stone Face was bending forward to listen too. He gazed earnestly into the poet's glowing eyes.

"Who are you, my strangely gifted guest?" he said.

The poet laid his finger on the volume that Ernest had been reading.

"You have read these poems," said he. "You know me, then—for I wrote them."

Again, and still more earnestly than before, Ernest examined the poet's features; then turned toward the Great Stone Face; then back, with an uncertain aspect, to his guest. But his countenance fell; and he shook his head and sighed.

"Wherefore are you sad?" inquired the poet.

"Because," replied Ernest, "all through life I have awaited the fulfilment of a prophecy; and, when I read these poems, I hoped that it might be fulfilled in you."

"You hoped," answered the poet, faintly smiling, "to find in me the likeness of the Great Stone Face. And you are disappointed, as formerly with Mr. Gathergold, and Old Blood-and-Thunder, and Old Stony Phiz. Yes, Ernest, it is my doom. You must add my name to the illustrious three, and record another failure of your hopes. For—in shame and sadness do I speak it, Ernest—I am not worthy to be typified by yonder benign and majestic image."

"And why?" asked Ernest. He pointed to the volume. "Are not those thoughts divine?"

"They have a strain of the Divinity," replied the poet. "You can hear in them the far-off echo of a heavenly song. But my life, dear Ernest, has not corresponded with my thought. I have had grand dreams, but they have been only dreams, because I have lived—and that, too, by my own choice—among poor and mean realities. Sometimes even—shall I dare to say it?—I lack faith in the grandeur, the beauty, and the goodness, which my own works are said to have made more evident in Nature and in human life. Why, then, pure seeker of the good and true, shouldst thou hope to find me in yonder image of the divine?"

The poet spoke sadly, and his eyes were dim with tears. So, likewise, were those of Ernest.

At the hour of sunset, as had long been his frequent custom, Ernest was to discourse to an assemblage of the neighbouring inhabitants in the open air. He and the poet, arm in arm, still talking together as they went along, proceeded to the spot. It was a small nook among the hills, with a grey precipice behind, the stern front of which was relieved by the pleasant foliage of many creeping plants that made a tapestry for the naked rock, by hanging their festoons from all its rugged angles. At a small elevation above the ground, set in a rich framework of verdure, there appeared a niche, spacious enough to admit a human figure, with freedom for such gestures as spontaneously accompany earnest thought and genuine emotion. Into this natural pulpit Ernest ascended, and threw a look of familiar kindness around upon his audience. They stood, or sat, or reclined upon the grass, as seemed good to each, with the departing sunshine falling obliquely over them, and mingling its subdued cheerfulness with the solemnity of a grove of ancient trees, beneath and amid the boughs of which the golden rays were constrained to pass. In another direction was seen the Great Stone Face, with the same cheer, combined with the same solemnity, in its benignant aspect.

Ernest began to speak, giving to the people of what was in his heart and mind. His words had power, because they accorded with his thoughts; and his thoughts had reality and depth, because they harmonised with the life which he had always lived. It was

not mere breath that this preacher uttered ; they were the words of life, because a life of good deeds and holy love was melted into them. Pearls, pure and rich, had been dissolved into this precious draught. The poet, as he listened, felt that the being and character of Ernest were a nobler strain of poetry than he had ever written. His eyes glistening with tears, he gazed reverentially at the venerable man, and said within himself that never was there an aspect so worthy of a prophet and a sage as that mild, sweet, thoughtful countenance, with the glory of white hair diffused about it. At a distance, but distinctly to be seen, high up in the golden light of the setting sun, appeared the Great Stone Face, with hoary mists around it, like the white hairs around the brow of Ernest. Its look of grand beneficence seemed to embrace the world.

At that moment, in sympathy with a thought which he was about to utter, the face of Ernest assumed a grandeur of expression so imbued with benevolence that the poet, by an irresistible impulse, threw his arms aloft, and shouted :

“ Behold ! Behold ! Ernest is himself the likeness of the Great Stone Face ! ”

Then all the people looked, and saw that what the deep-sighted poet said was true. The prophecy was fulfilled. But Ernest, having finished what he had to say, took the poet's arm, and walked slowly homeward, still hoping that some wiser and better man than himself would by and by appear, bearing a resemblance to the GREAT STONE FACE.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN

YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN came forth at sunset into the street of Salem village ; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "prithee put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed to-night. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afear'd of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year."

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?"

"Then God bless you!" said Faith, with the pink ribbons; "and may you find all well when you come back."

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee."

So they parted; and the young man pursued his way until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done to-night. But no, no; 'twould kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven."

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt

himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be ; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead ; so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself ; and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow !"

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown's approach and walked onward side by side with him.

"You are late, Goodman Brown," said he. "The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston ; and that is full fifteen minutes ago."

"Faith kept me back a while," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the governor's table or in King William's court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

"Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow-traveller, "this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary."

"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of."

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet."

"Too far! too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept——"

"Such company, thou wouldst say," observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own heart, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake."

"If it be as thou sayest," replied Goodman Brown, "I marvel they never spoke of these matters; or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumour of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness."

"Wickedness or not," said the traveller with the twisted staff, "I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me; the select men of divers towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too——But these are State secrets."

"Can this be so?" cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion. "Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? O, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day."

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted he again and again; then composing

himself. "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but prithee, don't kill me with laughing."

"Well, then, to end the matter at once," said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, "there is my wife Faith. It would break her dear little heart; and I'd rather break my own."

"Nay, if that be the case," answered the other, "e'en go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm."

As he spoke, he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognised a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

"A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall," said he. "But, with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going."

"Be it so," said his fellow-traveller. "Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path."

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff's length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words—a prayer, doubtless—as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail.

"The devil!" screamed the pious old lady.

"Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.

"Ah, forsooth, and it is your worship, indeed?" cried the good dame. "Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But—would your worship believe it?—my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf's bane——"

"Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud. "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling."

"That can hardly be," answered her friend. "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse; but here is my staff, if you will."

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognisance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"That old woman taught me my catechism," said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking-stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.

"Friend," said he stubbornly, "my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven: is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?"

"You will think better of this by and by," said his acquaintance composedly. "Sit here and rest yourself a while; and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along."

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled

sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man's hiding-place ; but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tip-toe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognised the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

"Of the two, reverend sir," said the voice like the deacon's, "I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to-night's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian powwows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion."

"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin !" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground."

The hoofs clattered again ; and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness ? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

"With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil !" cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of townspeople of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion table,

and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night. There was one voice, of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favour, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain; and all the unseen multitude, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, "Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a sad beg, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into a laugh, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and starry sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly upon the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young woman seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

"My Faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given."

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds—the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians; while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him. "Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your deviltry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian powwow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you."

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now

shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out; and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert.

In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared in upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

"A grave and dark-clad company," quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendour, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honoured husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognised a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted

fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled.

Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more. Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung; and still the chorus of the desert swelled between the deepest tone of a mighty organ; and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the unconverted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke wreaths above the impious assembly. At the same moment the fire on the rock shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches.

"Bring forth the converts!" cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have well-nigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, not to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the devil's promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she. And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire.

"Welcome, my children," said the dark figure, "to the communion of your race. Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!"

They turned ; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen ; the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

"There," resumed the sable form, "are all whom ye have revered from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds : how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households ; how many a woman, eager for widow's weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom ; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their father's wealth ; and how fair damsels—blush not, sweet ones—have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest, to an infant's funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places—whether in church, bed-chamber, street, field, or forest—where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power—than my power at its utmost—can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other."

They did so ; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

"Lo, there ye stand, my children," said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race. "Depending upon one another's hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream. Now are ye undeceived. Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race."

"Welcome," repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light ? or was it blood ? or, perchance, a liquid flame ? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The

husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

"Faith! Faith!" cried the husband, "look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one."

Whether Faith obeyed, he knew not. Hardly had he spoken when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp; while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was taking a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window. "What god doth the wizard pray to?" quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice, catechizing a little girl who had brought her a pint of morning's milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch meeting?

Be it so, if you will; but alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate, man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen, because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit, with power and fervid eloquence and with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saintlike lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the grey blasphemer and his hearers. Often, awaking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled, and muttered to

himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave, a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbours not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone; for his dying hour was gloom.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

ETHAN BRAND

BARTRAM, the lime-burner, a rough, heavy-looking man, begrimed with charcoal, sat watching his kiln, at nightfall, while his little son played at building houses with the scattered fragments of marble, when, on the hill-side below them, they heard a roar of laughter, not mirthful, but slow, and even solemn, like a wind shaking the boughs of the forest.

"Father, what is that?" asked the little boy, leaving his play, and pressing betwixt his father's knees.

"O, some drunken man, I suppose," answered the lime-burner: "some merry fellow from the bar-room in the village, who dared not laugh loud enough within doors, lest he should blow the roof of the house off. So here he is, shaking his jolly sides at the foot of Graylock."

"But, father," said the child, more sensitive than the obtuse, middle-aged clown, "he does not laugh like a man that is glad. So the noise frightens me!"

"Don't be a fool, child!" cried his father, gruffly. "You will never make a man, I do believe, there is too much of your mother in you. I have known the rustling of a leaf startle you. Hark! Here comes the merry fellow, now. You shall see that there is no harm in him."

Bartram and his little son, while they were talking thus, sat watching the same lime-kiln that had been the scene of Ethan Brand's solitary and meditative life, before he began his search for the Unpardonable Sin. Many years, as we have seen, had now elapsed since that portentous night when the IDEA was first developed. The kiln, however, on the mountain-side, stood unimpaired, and was in nothing changed, since he had thrown his dark thoughts into the intense glow of its furnace, and melted them, as it were, into the one thought that took possession of his life. It was a rude, round, tower-like structure, about twenty feet high, heavily built of rough stones, and with a hillock of earth heaped about the larger part of its circumference, so that the blocks and fragments of marble might

be drawn by cart-loads, and thrown in at the top. There was an opening at the bottom of the tower, like an oven-mouth, but large enough to admit a man in a stooping posture, and provided with a massive iron door. With the smoke and jets of flame issuing from the chinks and crevices of this door, which seemed to give admittance into the hill-side, it resembled nothing so much as the private entrance to the infernal regions, which the Shepherds of the Delectable Mountains were accustomed to show to pilgrims.

There are many such lime-kilns in that tract of country, for the purpose of burning the white marble which composes a large part of the substance of the hills. Some of them, built years ago, and long deserted, with weeds growing in the vacant round of the interior, which is open to the sky, and grass and wild flowers rooting themselves into the chinks of the stones, look already like relics of antiquity, and may yet be overspread with the lichens of centuries to come. Others, where the lime-burner still feeds his daily and night-long fire, afford points of interest to the wanderer among the hills, who seats himself on a log of wood or a fragment of marble, to hold a chat with the solitary man. It is a lonesome, and, when the character is inclined to thought, may be an intensely thoughtful occupation, as it proved in the case of Ethan Brand, who had mused to such strange purpose, in days gone by, while the fire in this very kiln was burning.

The man who now watched the fire was of a different order, and troubled himself with no thoughts save the very few that were requisite to his business. At frequent intervals he flung back the clashing weight of the iron door, and, turning his face from the insufferable glare, thrust in huge logs of oak, or stirred the immense brands with a long pole. Within the furnace were seen the curling and riotous flames, and the burning marble, almost molten with the intensity of heat ; while without, the reflection of the fire quivered on the dark intricacy of the surrounding forest, and showed in the foreground a bright and ruddy little picture of the hut, the spring beside its door, the athletic and coal-begrimed figure of the lime-burner, and the half-frightened child, shrinking into the protection of his father's shadow. And when again the iron door was closed, then reappeared the tender light of the half-moon, which vainly strove to trace out the indistinct shapes of the neighbouring mountains ; and, in the upper sky, there was a flitting congregation of clouds, still faintly tinged with the rosy sunset, though thus far down into the valley the sunshine had vanished long and long ago.

The little boy now crept still closer to his father, as footsteps were heard ascending the hill-side, and a human form thrust aside the bushes that clustered beneath the trees.

"Halloo ! who is it ?" cried the lime-burner, vexed at his son's

timidity, yet half infected by it. "Come forward, and show yourself, like a man, or I'll fling this chunk of marble at your head."

"You offer me a rough welcome," said a gloomy voice, as the unknown man drew nigh. "Yet I neither claim nor desire a kinder one, even at my own fire-side."

To obtain a distincter view, Bartram threw open the iron door of the kiln, whence immediately issued a gush of fierce light, that smote full upon the stranger's face and figure. To a careless eye there appeared nothing very remarkable in his aspect, which was that of a man in a coarse, brown, country-made suit of clothes, tall and thin, with the staff and heavy shoes of a wayfarer. As he advanced, he fixed his eyes—which were very bright—intently upon the brightness of the furnace, as if he beheld, or expected to behold, some object worthy of note within it.

"Good evening, stranger," said the lime-burner; "whence come you, so late in the day?"

"I come from my search," answered the wayfarer; "for at last it is finished."

"Drunk!—or crazy!" muttered Bartram to himself. "I shall have trouble with the fellow. The sooner I drive him away the better."

The little boy, all in a tremble, whispered to his father, and begged him to shut the door of the kiln, so that there might not be so much light; for that there was something in the man's face which he was afraid to look at, yet could not look away from. And, indeed, even the lime-burner's dull and torpid sense began to be impressed by an indescribable something in that thin, ragged, thoughtful visage, with the grizzled hair hanging wildly about it, and those deeply-sunken eyes, which gleamed like fires within the entrance of a mysterious cavern. But, as he closed the door, the stranger turned towards him, and spoke in a quiet, familiar way, that made Bartram feel as if he were a sane and sensible man, after all.

"Your task draws to an end, I see," said he. "This marble has already been burning three days. A few hours more will convert the stone to lime."

"Why, who are you?" exclaimed the lime-burner. "You seem as well acquainted with my business as I am myself."

"And well I may be," said the stranger; "for I followed the same craft many a long year, and here, too, on this very spot. But you are a new-comer in these parts. Did you never hear of Ethan Brand?"

"The man that went in search of the Unpardonable Sin?" asked Bartram, with a laugh.

"The same," answered the stranger. "He has found what he sought, and therefore he comes back again."

"What! then you are Ethan Brand himself?" cried the lime-burner, in amazement. "I am a new-comer here, as you say, and they call it eighteen years since you left the foot of Graylock. But I can tell you, the good folks still talk about Ethan Brand in the village yonder, and what a strange errand took him away from his lime-kiln. Well, and so you have found the Unpardonable Sin?"

"Even so!" said the stranger, calmly.

"If the question is a fair one," proceeded Bartram, "where might it be?"

Ethan Brand laid his finger on his own heart.

"Here!" replied he.

And then, without mirth in his countenance, but as if moved by an involuntary recognition of the infinite absurdity of seeking throughout the world for what was the closest of all things to himself, and looking into every heart, save his own, for what was hidden in no other breast, he broke into a laugh of scorn. It was the same slow, heavy laugh, that had almost appalled the lime-burner when it heralded the wayfarer's approach.

The solitary mountain-side was made dismal by it. Laughter, when out of place, mistimed, or bursting forth from a disordered state of feeling, may be the most terrible modulation of the human voice. The laughter of one asleep, even if it be a little child,—the madman's laugh,—the wild, screaming laugh of a born idiot,—are sounds that we sometimes tremble to hear, and would always willingly forget. Poets have imagined no utterance of fiends or hobgoblins so fearfully appropriate as a laugh. And even the obtuse lime-burner felt his nerves shaken, as this strange man looked inward at his own heart, and burst into laughter that rolled away into the night, and was indistinctly reverberated among the hills.

"Joe," said he to his little son, "scamper down to the tavern in the village, and tell the jolly fellows there that Ethan Brand has come back, and that he has found the Unpardonable Sin!"

The boy darted away on his errand, to which Ethan Brand made no objection, nor seemed hardly to notice it. He sat on a log of wood, looking steadfastly at the iron door of the kiln. When the child was out of sight, and his swift and light footsteps ceased to be heard treading first on the fallen leaves, and then on the rocky mountain-path, the lime-burner began to regret his departure. He felt that the little fellow's presence had been a barrier between his guest and himself, and that he must now deal, heart to heart, with a man who, on his own confession, had committed the one only crime for which heaven could afford no mercy. That crime, in its indistinct blackness, seemed to overshadow him. The lime-burner's own sins rose up within him, and made his memory riotous with the

throng of evil shapes that asserted their kindred with the Master-Sin, whatever it might be, which it was within the scope of man's corrupted nature to conceive and cherish. They were all of one family ; they went to and fro between his breast and Ethan Brand's, and carried dark greetings from one to the other.

Then Bartram remembered the stories which had grown traditional in reference to this strange man, who had come upon him like a shadow of the night, and was making himself at home in his old place, after so long absence, that the dead people, dead and buried for years, would have had more right to be at home, in any familiar spot, than he. Ethan Brand, it was said, had conversed with Satan himself in the lurid blaze of this very kiln. The legend had been matter of mirth heretofore, but looked grisly now. According to this tale, before Ethan Brand departed on his search, he had been accustomed to evoke a fiend from the hot furnace of the lime-kiln, night after night, in order to confer with him about the Unpardonable Sin ; the man and the fiend each labouring to frame the image of some mode of guilt which could neither be atoned for nor forgiven. And, with the first gleam of light upon the mountain-top, the fiend crept in at the iron door, there to abide the intensest element of fire, until again summoned forth to share in the dreadful task of extending man's possible guilt beyond the scope of Heaven's else infinite mercy.

While the lime-burner was struggling with the horror of these thoughts, Ethan Brand rose from the log, and flung open the door of the kiln. The action was in such accordance with the idea in Bartram's mind, that he almost expected to see the Evil One issue forth, red-hot from the raging furnace.

" Hold ! hold ! " cried he, with a tremulous attempt to laugh ; for he was ashamed of his fears, although they overmastered him. " Don't, for mercy's sake, bring out your devil now ! "

" Man ! " sternly replied Ethan Brand, " what need have I of the devil ? I have left him behind me, on my track. It is with such half-way sinners as you that he busies himself. Fear not because I open the door. I do but act by old custom, and am going to trim your fire like a lime-burner, as I was once."

He stirred the vast coals, thrust in more wood, and bent forward to gaze into the hollow prison-house of the fire, regardless of the fierce glow that reddened upon his face. The lime-burner sat watching him, and half suspected his strange guest of a purpose, if not to evoke a fiend, at least to plunge bodily into the flames, and thus vanish from the sight of man. Ethan Brand, however, drew quietly back, and closed the door of the kiln.

" I have looked," said he, " into many a human heart that was seven times hotter with sinful passions than yonder furnace is with

fire. But I found not there what I sought. No, not the Unpardonable Sin ! ”

“ What is the Unpardonable Sin ? ” asked the lime-burner ; and then he shrank further from his companion, trembling lest his question should be answered.

“ It is a sin that grew within my own breast,” replied Ethan Brand, standing erect with a pride that distinguishes all enthusiasts of his stamp. “ A sin that grew nowhere else ! The sin of an intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its own mighty claims ! The only sin that deserves a recompense of immortal agony ! Freely, were it to do again, would I incur the guilt. Unshrinkingly I accept the retribution ! ”

“ The man’s head is turned,” muttered the lime-burner to himself. “ He may be a sinner like the rest of us,—nothing more likely,—but, I’ll be sworn, he is a madman too.”

Nevertheless, he felt uncomfortable at his situation, alone with Ethan Brand on the wild mountain-side, and was right glad to hear the rough murmur of tongues, and the footsteps of what seemed a pretty numerous party, stumbling over the stones and rustling through the underbush. Soon appeared the whole lazy regiment that was wont to infest the village tavern, comprehending three or four individuals who had drunk flip beside the bar-room fire through all the winters, and smoked their pipes beneath the stoop through all the summers, since Ethan Brand’s departure. Laughing boisterously, and mingling all their voices together in unceremonious talk, they now burst into the moonshine and narrow streaks of fire-light that illuminated the open space before the lime-kiln. Bartram set the door ajar again, flooding the spot with light, that the whole company might get a fair view of Ethan Brand, and he of them.

There, among other old acquaintances, was a once ubiquitous man, now almost extinct, but whom we were formerly sure to encounter at the hotel of every thriving village throughout the country. It was the stage-agent. The present specimen of the genus was a wilted and smoke-dried man, wrinkled and red-nosed, in a smartly-cut brown bob-tailed coat, with brass buttons, who for a length of time unknown had kept his desk and corner in the bar-room, and was still puffing what seemed to be the same cigar that he had lighted twenty years before. He had great fame as a dry joker, though, perhaps, less on account of any intrinsic humour than from a certain flavour of brandy-toddy and tobacco-smoke, which impregnated all his ideas and expressions as well as his person. Another well-remembered though strangely-altered face was that of Lawyer Giles, as people still called him in courtesy ; an elderly ragamuffin,

in his soiled shirt-sleeves and tow-cloth trousers. This poor fellow had been an attorney, in what he called his better days, a sharp practitioner, and in great vogue among the village litigants ; but flip, and sling, and toddy, and cocktails, imbibed at all hours, morning, noon, and night, had caused him to slide from intellectual to various kinds and degrees of bodily labour, till at last, to adopt his own phrase, he slid into a soap-vat. In other words, Giles was now a soap-boiler in a small way. He had come to be but the fragment of a human being, a part of one foot having been chopped off by an axe, and an entire hand torn away by the devilish grip of a steam-engine. Yet, though the corporeal hand was gone, a spiritual member remained ; for, stretching forth the stump, Giles steadfastly averred that he felt an invisible thumb and fingers with as vivid a sensation as before the real ones were amputated. A maimed and miserable wretch he was ; but one, nevertheless, whom the world could not trample on, and had no right to scorn, either in this or any previous stage of his misfortunes, since he had still kept up the courage and spirit of a man, asked nothing in charity, and with his one hand, and that the left one, fought a stern battle against want and hostile circumstances.

Among the throng, too, came another personage, who, with certain points of similarity to Lawyer Giles, had many more of difference. It was the village doctor ; a man of some fifty years, whom, at an earlier period of his life, we introduced as paying a professional visit to Ethan Brand during the latter's supposed insanity. He was now a purple-visaged, rude, and brutal, yet half-gentlemanly figure, with something wild, ruined, and desperate in his talk, and in all the details of his gesture and manners. Brandy possessed this man like an evil spirit, and made him as surly and savage as a wild beast, and as miserable as a lost soul ; but there was supposed to be in him such wonderful skill, such native gifts of healing, beyond any which medical science could impart, that society caught hold of him, and would not let him sink out of its reach. So, swaying to and fro upon his horse, and grumbling thick accents at the bedside, he visited all the sick-chambers for miles about, among the mountain towns, and sometimes raised a dying man, as it were, by miracle, or quite as often, no doubt, sent his patient to a grave that was dug many a year too soon. The doctor had an everlasting pipe in his mouth, and, as somebody said, in allusion to his habit of swearing, it was always alight with hell-fire.

These three worthies pressed forward, and greeted Ethan Brand each after his own fashion, earnestly inviting him to partake of the contents of a certain black bottle, in which, as they averred, he would find something far better worth seeking for than the Unpardonable Sin. No mind, which has wrought itself by intense and

solitary meditation into a high state of enthusiasm, can endure the kind of contact with low and vulgar modes of thought and feeling to which Ethan Brand was now subjected. It made him doubt—and, strange to say, it was a painful doubt—whether he had indeed found the Unpardonable Sin, and found it within himself. The whole question on which he had exhausted life, and more than life, looked like a delusion.

"Leave me," he said bitterly, "ye brute beasts, that have made yourselves so, shrivelling up your souls with fiery liquors! I have done with you. Years and years ago I groped into your hearts, and found nothing there for my purpose. Get ye gone!"

"Why, you uncivil scoundrel," cried the fierce doctor, "is that the way you respond to the kindness of your best friends? Then let me tell you the truth. You have no more found the Unpardonable Sin than yonder boy Joe has. You are but a crazy fellow,—I told you so twenty years ago,—neither better nor worse than a crazy fellow, and the fit companion of old Humphrey here!"

He pointed to an old man, shabbily dressed, with long white hair, thin visage, and unsteady eyes. For some years past this aged person had been wandering about among the hills, inquiring of all travellers whom he met for his daughter. The girl, it seemed, had gone off with a company of circus-performers; and occasionally tidings of her came to the village, and fine stories were told of her glittering appearance as she rode on horseback in the ring, or performed marvellous feats on the tight-rope.

The white-haired father now approached Ethan Brand, and gazed unsteadily into his face.

"They tell me you have been all over the earth," said he, wringing his hands with earnestness. "You must have seen my daughter, for she makes a grand figure in the world, and everybody goes to see her. Did she send any word to her old father, or say when she was coming back?"

Ethan Brand's eye quailed beneath the old man's. That daughter, from whom he so earnestly desired a word of greeting, was the Esther of our tale, the very girl whom, with such cold and remorseless purpose, Ethan Brand had made the subject of a psychological experiment, and wasted, absorbed, and perhaps annihilated her soul, in the process.

"Yes," murmured he, turning away from the hoary wanderer; "it is no delusion. There is an Unpardonable Sin."

While these things were passing, a merry scene was going forward in the area of cheerful light, beside the spring and before the door of the hut. A number of the youth of the village, young men and girls, had hurried up the hill-side, impelled by curiosity to see Ethan Brand, the hero of so many a legend familiar to their childhood.

Finding nothing, however, very remarkable in his aspect,—nothing but a sun-burnt wayfarer, in plain garb and dusty shoes, who sat looking into the fire, as if he fancied pictures among the coals,—these young people speedily grew tired of observing him. As it happened, there was other amusement at hand. An old German Jew, travelling with a diorama on his back, was passing down the mountain-road towards the village just as the party turned aside from it, and, in hopes of eking out the profits of the day, the showman had kept them company to the lime-kiln.

"Come, old Dutchman," cried one of the young men, "let us see your pictures, if you can swear they are worth looking at!"

"O, yes, Captain," answered the Jew,—whether as a matter of courtesy or craft, he styled everybody Captain,—“I shall show you, indeed, some very superb pictures!”

So, placing his box in a proper position, he invited the young men and girls to look through the glass orifices of the machine, and proceeded to exhibit a series of the most outrageous scratchings and daubings, as specimens of the fine arts, that ever an itinerant showman had the face to impose upon his circle of spectators. The pictures were worn out, moreover, tattered, full of cracks and wrinkles, dingy with tobacco-smoke, and otherwise in a most pitiable condition. Some purported to be cities, public edifices, and ruined castles in Europe; others represented Napoleon's battles and Nelson's sea-fights; and in the midst of these would be seen a gigantic, brown, hairy hand,—which might have been mistaken for the Hand of Destiny, though, in truth, it was only the showman's,—pointing its forefinger to various scenes of the conflict, while its owner gave historical illustrations. When, with much merriment at its abominable deficiency of merit, the exhibition was concluded, the German bade little Joe put his head into the box. Viewed through the magnifying glasses, the boy's round, rosy visage assumed the strangest imaginable aspect of an immense Titanic child, the mouth grinning broadly, and the eyes and every other feature overflowing with fun at the joke. Suddenly, however, that merry face turned pale, and its expression changed to horror, for this easily-impressed and excitable child had become sensible that the eye of Ethan Brand was fixed upon him through the glass.

"You make the little man to be afraid, Captain," said the German Jew, turning up the dark and strong outline of his visage, from his stooping posture. "But look again, and, by chance, I shall cause you to see somewhat that is very fine, upon my word!"

Ethan Brand gazed into the box for an instant, and then starting back, looked fixedly at the German. What had he seen? Nothing, apparently; for a curious youth, who had peeped in almost at the same moment, beheld only a vacant space of canvas.

"I remember you now," muttered Ethan Brand to the showman.

"Ah, Captain," whispered the Jew of Nuremburg, with a dark smile, "I find it to be a heavy matter in my show-box,—this Unpardonable Sin! By my faith, Captain, it has wearied my shoulders, this long day, to carry it over the mountain."

"Peace," answered Ethan Brand, sternly, "or get thee into the furnace yonder!"

The Jew's exhibition had scarcely concluded, when a great elderly dog, who seemed to be his own master, as no person in the company laid claim to him, saw fit to render himself the object of public notice. Hitherto he had shown himself a very quiet, well-disposed old dog, going round from one to another, and, by way of being sociable, offering his rough head to be patted by any kindly hand that would take so much trouble. But now, all of a sudden, this grave and venerable quadruped, of his own mere notion, and without the slightest suggestion from anybody else, began to run round after his tail, which, to heighten the absurdity of the proceeding, was a great deal shorter than it should have been. Never was seen such headlong eagerness in pursuit of an object that could not possibly be attained; never was heard such a tremendous outbreak of growling, snarling, barking, and snapping,—as if one end of the ridiculous brute's body were at deadly and most unforgivable enmity with the other. Faster and faster, round about went the cur; and faster and still faster fled the unapproachable brevity of his tail; and louder and fiercer grew his yells of rage and animosity; until, utterly exhausted, and as far from the goal as ever, the foolish old dog ceased his performance as suddenly as he had begun it. The next moment he was as mild, quiet, sensible, and respectable in his deportment as when he first scraped acquaintance with the company.

As may be supposed, the exhibition was greeted with universal laughter, clapping of hands, and shouts of encore! to which the canine performer responded by wagging all that there was to wag of his tail, but appeared totally unable to repeat his very successful effort to amuse the spectators.

Meanwhile, Ethan Brand had resumed his seat on the log, and moved, it might be, by the perception of some remote analogy between his own case and that of this self-pursuing cur, he broke into the awful laugh which, more than any other token, expressed the condition of his inward being. From that moment the merriment of the party was at an end; they stood aghast, dreading lest the inauspicious sound should be reverberated around the horizon, and that mountain would thunder it to mountain, and so the horror be prolonged upon their ears. Then, whispering one to another that it was late,—that the moon was almost down—that

the August night was growing chill,—they hurried homewards, leaving the lime-burner and little Joe to deal as they might with their unwelcome guest. Save for these three human beings, the open space on the hill-side was a solitude, set in a vast gloom of forest. Beyond that darksome verge, the firelight glimmered on the stately trunks and almost black foliage of pines, intermixed with the lighter verdure of sapling oaks, maples, and poplars, while here and there lay the gigantic corpses of dead trees, decaying on the leaf-strewn soil. And it seemed to little Joe—a timorous and imaginative child—that the silent forest was holding its breath until some fearful thing should happen.

Ethan Brand thrust more wood into the fire, and closed the door of the kiln; then looking over his shoulder at the lime-burner and his son, he bade, rather than advised, them to retire to rest.

“For myself, I cannot sleep,” said he. “I have matters that it concerns me to meditate upon. I will watch the fire, as I used to do in the old time.”

“And call the devil out of the furnace to keep you company, I suppose,” muttered Bartram, who had been making intimate acquaintance with the black bottle above mentioned. “But watch if you like, and call as many devils as you like! For my part, I shall be all the better for a snooze. Come, Joe!”

As the boy followed his father into the hut, he looked back at the wayfarer, and the tears came into his eyes; for his tender spirit had an intuition of the bleak and terrible loneliness in which this man had enveloped himself.

When they had gone, Ethan Brand sat listening to the crackling of the kindled wood, and looking at the little spirits of fire that issued through the chinks of the door. These trifles, however, once so familiar, had but the slightest hold of his attention, while deep within his mind he was reviewing the gradual but marvellous change that had been brought upon him by the search to which he had devoted himself. He remembered how the night-dew had fallen upon him,—how the dark forest had whispered to him,—how the stars had gleamed upon him,—a simple and loving man, watching his fire in the years gone by, and ever musing as it burned. He remembered with what tenderness, with what love and sympathy for mankind, and what pity for human guilt and woe, he had first begun to contemplate those ideas which afterwards became the inspiration of his life; with what reverence he had then looked into the heart of man, viewing it as a temple originally divine, and, however desecrated, still to be held sacred by a brother; with what awful fear he had deprecated the success of his pursuit, and prayed that the Unpardonable Sin might never be revealed to him. Then ensued the vast intellectual development, which, in its

progress, disturbed the counterpoise between his mind and heart. The idea that possessed his life had operated as a means of education ; it had gone on cultivating his powers to the highest point of which they were susceptible ; it had raised him from the level of an unlettered labourer to stand on a star-like eminence, whither the philosophers of the earth, laden with the lore of universities, might vainly strive to clamber after him. So much for the intellect ! But where was the heart ? That, indeed, had withered—had contracted—had hardened—had perished ! It had ceased to partake of the universal throb. He had lost his hold of the magnetic chain of humanity. He was no longer a brother man, opening the chambers of the dungeons of our common nature by the key of holy sympathy, which gave him a right to share in all its secrets ; he was now a cold observer, looking on mankind as the subject of his experiment, and, at length, converting man and woman to be his puppets, and pulling the wires that moved them to such degrees of crime as were demanded for his study.

Thus Ethan Brand became a fiend. He began to be so from the moment that his moral nature had ceased to keep the pace of improvement with his intellect. And now, as his highest effort and inevitable development,—as the bright and gorgeous flower, and rich, delicious fruit of his life's labour,—he had produced the Unpardonable Sin !

"What more have I to seek ? What more to achieve ? " said Ethan Brand to himself. "My task is done, and well done !"

Starting from the log with a certain alacrity in his gait, and ascending the hillock of earth that was raised against the stone circumference of the lime-kiln, he thus reached the top of the structure. It was a space of perhaps ten feet across, from edge to edge, presenting a view of the upper surface of the immense mass of broken marble with which the kiln was heaped. All these innumerable blocks and fragments of marble were red-hot and vividly on fire, sending up great spouts of blue flame, which quivered aloft and danced madly, as within a magic circle, and sank and rose again, with continual and multitudinous activity. As the lonely man bent forward over this terrible body of fire, the blasting heat smote up against his person with a breath that, it might be supposed, would have scorched and shrivelled him up in a moment.

Ethan Brand stood erect, and raised his arms on high. The blue flames played upon his face, and imparted the wild and ghastly light which alone could have suited its expression ; it was that of a fiend on the verge of plunging into his gulf of intensest torment.

"O Mother Earth," cried he, "who art no more my Mother, and into whose bosom this frame shall never be resolved ! O mankind, whose brotherhood I have cast off, and trampled thy great heart

beneath my feet ! O stars of heaven, that shone on me of old, as if to light me onward and upward !—farewell all, and for ever. Come, deadly element of Fire,—henceforth my familiar friend ! Embrace me, as I do thee ! ”

That night the sound of a fearful peal of laughter rolled heavily through the sleep of the lime-burner and his little son ; dim shapes of horror and anguish haunted their dreams, and seemed still present in the rude hovel, when they opened their eyes to the daylight.

“ Up, boy, up ! ” cried the lime-burner, staring about him. “ Thank Heaven, the night is gone, at last ; and rather than pass such another, I would watch my lime-kiln, wide awake, for a twelvemonth. This Ethan Brand, with his humbug of an Unpardonable Sin, had done me no such mighty favour in taking my place.”

He issued from the hut, followed by little Joe, who kept fast hold of his father’s hand. The early sunshine was already pouring its gold upon the mountain-tops ; and though the valleys were still in shadow, they smiled cheerfully in the promise of the bright day that was hastening onward. The village, completely shut in by hills, which swelled away gently about it, looked as if it had rested peacefully in the hollow of the great hand of Providence. Every dwelling was distinctly visible ; the little spires of the two churches pointed upwards, and caught a fore-glimmering of brightness from the sun-gilt skies upon their gilded weather-cocks. The tavern was astir, and the figure of the old, smoke-dried stage-agent, cigar in mouth, was seen beneath the stoop. Old Graylock was glorified with a golden cloud upon his head. Scattered likewise over the breasts of the surrounding mountains, there were heaps of hoary mists, in fantastic shapes, some of them far down into the valley, others high up towards the summits, and still others, of the same family of mist or cloud, hovering in the gold-radiance of the upper atmosphere. Stepping from one another of the clouds that rested on the hills, and thence to the loftier brotherhood that sailed in air, it seemed almost as if a mortal man might thus ascend into the heavenly regions. Earth was so mingled with sky that it was a day-dream to look at it.

To supply that charm of the familiar and homely, which Nature so readily adopts into a scene like this, the stage-coach was rattling down the mountain-road, and the driver sounded his horn, while echo caught up the notes and interwined them into a rich and varied and elaborate harmony, of which the original performer could lay claim to little share. The great hills played a concert among themselves, each contributing a strain of airy sweetness.

Little Joe’s face brightened at once.

"Dear father," cried he, skipping cheerily to and fro, "that strange man is gone, and the sky and the mountains all seem glad of it!"

"Yes," growled the lime-burner, with an oath, "but he has let the fire go down, and no thanks to him if five hundred bushels of lime are not spoiled. If I catch the fellow hereabouts again, I shall feel like tossing him into the furnace!"

With his long pole in his hand, he ascended to the top of the kiln. After a moment's pause, he called to his son.

"Come up here, Joe!" said he.

So little Joe ran up the hillock, and stood by his father's side. The marble was all burnt into perfect, snow-white lime. But on its surface, in the midst of the circle,—snow-white, too, and thoroughly converted into lime,—lay a human skeleton, in the attitude of a person who, after long toil, lies down to long repose. Within the ribs, strange to say, was the shape of a human heart.

"Was the fellow's heart made of marble?" cried Bartram, in some perplexity at this phenomenon. "At any rate, it is burnt into what looks like special good lime; and, taking all the bones together, my kiln is half a bushel the richer for him."

So saying, the rude lime-burner lifted his pole, and letting it fall upon the skeleton, the relics of Ethan Brand were crumbled into fragments.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

THE CELESTIAL RAILROAD

Nor a great while ago, passing through the gate of dreams, I visited that region of the earth in which lies the famous City of Destruction. It interested me much to learn that by the public spirit of some of the inhabitants a railroad has recently been established between this populous and flourishing town and the Celestial City. Having a little time upon my hands, I resolved to gratify a liberal curiosity by making a trip thither. Accordingly, one fine morning, after paying my bill at the hotel and directing the porter to stow my luggage behind a coach, I took my seat in the vehicle and set out for the station-house. It was my good fortune to enjoy the company of a gentleman—one Mr. Smooth-it-away—who, though he had never actually visited the Celestial City, yet seemed as well acquainted with its laws, customs, policy, and statistics as with those of the City of Destruction, of which he was a native townsman. Being, moreover, a director of the railroad corporation and one of its largest stockholders, he had it in his power to give me all desirable information respecting that praiseworthy enterprise.

Our coach rattled out of the city, and at a short distance from its outskirts passed over a bridge of elegant construction, but somewhat too slight, as I imagined, to sustain any considerable weight. On both sides lay an extensive quagmire, which could not have been more disagreeable, either to sight or smell, had all the kennels of the earth emptied their pollution there.

"This," remarked Mr. Smooth-it-away, "is the famous Slough of Despond—a disgrace to all the neighbourhood; and the greater, that it might so easily be converted into firm ground."

"I have understood," said I, "that efforts have been made for that purpose from time immemorial. Bunyan mentions that above twenty thousand cartloads of wholesome instructions had been thrown in here without effect."

"Very probably! And what effect could be anticipated from such unsubstantial stuff?" cried Mr. Smooth-it-away. "You

observe this convenient bridge. We obtained a sufficient foundation for it by throwing into the slough some editions of books of morality: volumes of French philosophy and German rationalism; tracts, sermons, and essays of modern clergymen; extracts from Plato, Confucius, and various Hindoo sages, together with a few ingenious commentaries upon texts of Scripture,—all of which, by some scientific process, have been converted into a mass like granite. The whole bog might be filled up with similar matter."

It really seemed to me, however, that the bridge vibrated and heaved up and down in a very formidable manner; and, spite of Mr Smooth-it-away's testimony to the solidity of its foundation, I should be loath to cross it in a crowded omnibus, especially if each passenger were encumbered with as heavy luggage as that gentleman and myself. Nevertheless we got over without accident, and soon found ourselves at the station-house. This very neat and spacious edifice is erected on the site of the little wicket gate, which formerly, as all old pilgrims will recollect, stood directly across the highway, and, by its inconvenient narrowness, was a great obstruction to the traveller of liberal mind and expansive stomach. The reader of John Bunyan will be glad to know that Christian's old friend Evangelist, who was accustomed to supply each pilgrim with a mystic roll, now presides at the ticket office. Some malicious persons, it is true, deny the identity of this reputable character with the Evangelist of old times, and even pretend to bring competent evidence of an imposture. Without involving myself in a dispute I shall merely observe that, so far as my experience goes, the square pieces of pasteboard now delivered to passengers are much more convenient and useful along the road than the antique roll of parchment. Whether they will be as readily received at the gate of the Celestial City I decline giving an opinion.

A large number of passengers were already at the station-house awaiting the departure of the cars. By the aspect and demeanour of these persons it was easy to judge that the feelings of the community had undergone a very favourable change in reference to the celestial pilgrimage. It would have done Bunyan's heart good to see it. Instead of a lonely and ragged man, with a huge burden on his back, plodding along sorrowfully on foot while the whole city hooted after him, here were parties of the first gentry and most respectable people in the neighbourhood setting forth towards the Celestial City as cheerfully as if the pilgrimage were merely a summer tour. Among the gentlemen were characters of deserved eminence—magistrates, politicians, and men of wealth, by whose example religion could not but be greatly recommended to their meaner brethren. In the ladies' apartment, too, I rejoiced to distinguish some of those flowers of fashionable society who are so

well fitted to adorn the most elevated circles of the Celestial City. There was much pleasant conversation about the news of the day, topics of business, and politics, or the lighter matters of amusement ; while religion, though indubitably the main thing at heart, was thrown tastefully into the background. Even an infidel would have heard little or nothing to shock his sensibility.

One great convenience of the new method of going on pilgrimage I must not forget to mention. Our enormous burdens, instead of being carried on our shoulders as had been the custom of old, were all snugly deposited in the baggage car, and, as I was assured, would be delivered to their respective owners at the journey's end. Another thing, likewise, the benevolent reader will be delighted to understand. It may be remembered that there was an ancient feud between Prince Beelzebub and the keeper of the wicket gate, and that the adherents of the former distinguished personage were accustomed to shoot deadly arrows at honest pilgrims while knocking at the door. This dispute, much to the credit as well of the illustrious potentate above mentioned as of the worthy and enlightened directors of the railroad, has been pacifically arranged on the principle of mutual compromise. The prince's subjects are now pretty numerously employed about the station-house, some in taking care of the baggage, others in collecting fuel, feeding the engines, and such congenial occupations ; and I can conscientiously affirm that persons more attentive to their business, more willing to accommodate, or more generally agreeable to the passengers, are not to be found on any railroad. Every good heart must surely exult at so satisfactory an arrangement of an immemorial difficulty.

"Where is Mr. Greatheart ?" inquired I. "Beyond a doubt the directors have engaged that famous old champion to be chief conductor on the railroad ?"

"Why, no," said Mr. Smooth-it-away, with a dry cough. "He was offered the situation of brakeman ; but, to tell you the truth, our friend Greatheart has grown preposterously stiff and narrow in his old age. He has so often guided pilgrims over the road on foot that he considers it a sin to travel in any other fashion. Besides, the old fellow had entered so heartily into the ancient feud with Prince Beelzebub that he would have been perpetually at blows or ill language with some of the prince's subjects, and thus have embroiled us anew. So, on the whole, we were not sorry when honest Greatheart went off to the Celestial City in a huff and left us at liberty to choose a more suitable and accommodating man. Yonder comes the engineer of the train. You will probably recognise him at once."

The engine at this moment took its station in advance of the cars, looking, I must confess, much more like a sort of mechanical demon

that would hurry us to the infernal regions than a laudable contrivance for smoothing our way to the Celestial City. On its top sat a personage almost enveloped in smoke and flame, which, not to startle the reader, appeared to gush from his own mouth and stomach as well as from the engine's brazen abdomen.

"Do my eyes deceive me?" cried I. "What on earth is this! A living creature? If so, he is own brother to the engine he rides upon!"

"Poh, poh, you are obtuse!" said Mr. Smooth-it-away, with a hearty laugh. "Don't you know Apollyon, Christian's old enemy, with whom he fought so fierce a battle in the Valley of Humiliation? He was the very fellow to manage the engine; and so we have reconciled him to the custom of going on pilgrimage, and engaged him as chief engineer."

"Bravo, bravo!" exclaimed I, with irrepressible enthusiasm; "this shows the liberality of the age; this proves, if anything can, that all musty prejudices are in a fair way to be obliterated. And how will Christian rejoice to hear of this happy transformation of his old antagonist! I promise myself great pleasure in informing him of it when we reach the Celestial City."

The passengers being all comfortably seated, we now rattled away merrily, accomplishing a greater distance in ten minutes than Christian probably trudged over in a day. It was laughable, while we glanced along, as it were, at the tail of a thunderbolt, to observe two dusty foot travellers in the old pilgrim guise, with cockle shell and staff, their mystic rolls of parchment in their hands and their intolerable burdens on their backs. The preposterous obstinacy of these honest people in persisting to groan and stumble along the difficult pathway rather than take advantage of modern improvements, excited great mirth among our wiser brotherhood. We greeted the two pilgrims with many pleasant gibes and a roar of laughter; whereupon they gazed at us with such woeful and absurdly compassionate visages that our merriment grew tenfold more obstreperous. Apollyon also entered heartily into the fun, and contrived to flirt the smoke and flame of the engine, or of his own breath, into their faces, and envelop them in an atmosphere of scalding steam. These little practical jokes amused us mightily, and doubtless afforded the pilgrims the gratification of considering themselves martyrs.

At some distance from the railroad Mr. Smooth-it-away pointed to a large, antique edifice, which, he observed, was a tavern of long standing and had formerly been a noted stopping-place for pilgrims. In Bunyan's road book it is mentioned as the Interpreter's House.

"I have long had a curiosity to visit that old mansion," remarked I.

"It is not one of our stations, as you perceive," said my companion. "The keeper was violently opposed to the railroad; and well he might be, as the track left his house of entertainment on one side, and thus was pretty certain to deprive him of all his reputable customers. But the footpath still passes his door; and the old gentleman now and then receives a call from some simple traveller, and entertains him with fare as old-fashioned as himself."

Before our talk on this subject came to a conclusion we were rushing by the place where Christian's burden fell from his shoulders at the side of the Cross. This served as a theme for Mr. Smooth-it-away, Mr. Live-for-the-world, Mr. Hide-sin-in-the-heart, Mr. Scaly-conscience, and a knot of gentlemen from the town of Shun-repentance, to descant upon the inestimable advantages resulting from the safety of our baggage. Myself, and all the passengers indeed, joined with great unanimity in this view of the matter; for our burdens were rich in many things esteemed precious throughout the world; and, especially, we each of us possessed a great variety of favourite Habits, which we trusted would not be out of fashion even in the polite circles of the Celestial City. It would have been a sad spectacle to see such an assortment of valuable articles tumbling into the sepulchre. Thus pleasantly conversing on the favourable circumstances of our position as compared with those of past pilgrims and of narrow-minded ones at the present day, we soon found ourselves at the foot of the Hill Difficulty. Through the very heart of this rocky mountain a tunnel has been constructed of most admirable architecture, with a lofty arch and a spacious double track; so that, unless the earth and rocks should chance to crumble down, it will remain an eternal monument of the builder's skill and enterprise. It is a great though incidental advantage that the materials from the heart of the Hill Difficulty have been employed in filling up the Valley of Humiliation, thus obviating the necessity of descending into that disagreeable and unwholesome hollow.

"This is a wonderful improvement, indeed," said I. "Yet I should have been glad of an opportunity to visit the Palace Beautiful and be introduced to the charming young ladies—Miss Prudence, Miss Piety, Miss Charity, and the rest—who have the kindness to entertain pilgrims there."

"Young ladies!" cried Mr. Smooth-it-away, as soon as he could speak for laughing. "And charming young ladies! Why, my dear fellow, they are old maids, every soul of them—prim, starched, dry, and angular; and not one of them, I will venture to say, has altered so much as the fashion of her gown since the days of Christian's pilgrimage."

"Ah, well," said I, much comforted, "then I can very readily dispense with their acquaintance."

The respectable Apollyon was now putting on the steam at a prodigious rate, anxious, perhaps, to get rid of the unpleasant reminiscences connected with the spot where he had so disastrously encountered Christian. Consulting Mr. Bunyan's road book, I perceived that we must now be within a few miles of the Valley of the Shadow of Death, into which doleful region, at our present speed, we should plunge much sooner than seemed at all desirable. In truth, I expected nothing better than to find myself in the ditch on one side or the quag on the other ; but on communicating my apprehensions to Mr. Smooth-it-away, he assured me that the difficulties of this passage, even in its worst condition, had been vastly exaggerated, and that, in its present state of improvement, I might consider myself as safe as on any railroad in Christendom.

Even while we were speaking the train shot into the entrance of this dreaded Valley. Though I plead guilty to some foolish palpitations of the heart during our headlong rush over the causeway here constructed, yet it were unjust to withhold the highest encomiums on the boldness of its original conception, and the ingenuity of those who executed it. It was gratifying, likewise, to observe how much care had been taken to dispel the everlasting gloom and supply the defect of cheerful sunshine, not a ray of which has ever penetrated among these awful shadows. For this purpose, the inflammable gas which exudes plentifully from the soil is collected by means of pipes, and thence communicated to a quadruple row of lamps along the whole extent of the passage. Thus a radiance has been created even out of the fiery and sulphurous curse that rests for ever upon the valley—a radiance hurtful, however, to the eyes, and somewhat bewildering, as I discovered by the changes which it wrought in the visages of my companions. In this respect, as compared with natural daylight, there is the same difference as between truth and falsehood ; but if the reader have ever travelled through the dark Valley, he will have learned to be thankful for any light that he could get—if not from the sky above, then from the blasted soil beneath. Such was the red brilliancy of these lamps that they appeared to build walls of fire on both sides of the track, between which we held our course at lightning speed, while a reverberating thunder filled the Valley with its echoes. Had the engine run off the track,—a catastrophe, it is whispered, by no means unprecedented,—the bottomless pit, if there be any such place, would undoubtedly have received us. Just as some dismal fooleries of this nature had made my heart quake there came a tremendous shriek, careering along the Valley as if a thousand devils had burst their lungs to utter it, but which proved to be merely the whistle of the engine on arriving at a stopping-place.

The spot where we had now paused is the same that our friend

Bunyan—a truthful man, but infected with many fantastic notions—has designated, in terms plainer than I like to repeat, as the mouth of the infernal region. This, however, must be a mistake, inasmuch as Mr. Smooth-it-away, while we remained in the smoky and lurid cavern, took occasion to prove that Tophet has not even a metaphorical existence. The place, he assured us, is no other than the crater of a half-extinct volcano, in which the directors had caused forges to be set up for the manufacture of railroad iron. Hence, also, is obtained a plentiful supply of fuel for the use of the engines. Whoever had gazed into the dismal obscurity of the broad cavern mouth, whence ever and anon darted huge tongues of dusty flame, and had seen the strange, half-shaped monsters, and visions of faces horribly grotesque, into which the smoke seemed to wreath itself, and had heard the awful murmurs, and shrieks, and deep, shuddering whispers of the blast, sometimes forming themselves into words almost articulate, would have seized upon Mr. Smooth-it-away's comfortable explanation as greedily as we did. The inhabitants of the cavern, moreover, were unlovely personages, dark, smoke-begrimed, generally deformed, with misshapen feet, and a glow of dusty redness in their eyes as if their hearts had caught fire and were blazing out of the upper windows. It struck me as a peculiarity that the labourers at the forge and those who brought fuel to the engine, when they began to draw short breath, positively emitted smoke from their mouth and nostrils.

Among the idlers about the train, most of whom were puffing cigars which they had lighted at the flame of the crater, I was perplexed to notice several who, to my certain knowledge, had heretofore set forth by railroad for the Celestial City. They looked dark, wild, and smoky, with a singular resemblance, indeed, to the native inhabitants, like whom, also, they had a disagreeable propensity to ill-natured gibes and sneers, the habit of which had wrought a settled contortion of their visages. Having been on speaking terms with one of these persons,—an indolent, good-for-nothing fellow, who went by the name of Take-it-easy,—I called him, and inquired what was his business there.

“Did you not start,” said I, “for the Celestial City?”

“That's a fact,” said Mr. Take-it-easy, carelessly puffing some smoke into my eyes. “But I heard such bad accounts that I never took pains to climb the hill on which the city stands. No business doing, no fun going on, nothing to drink, and no smoking allowed, and a thrumming of church music from morning till night. I would not stay in such a place if they offered me house room and living free.”

“But, my good Mr. Take-it-easy,” cried I, “why take up your residence here, of all places in the world?”

"Oh," said the loafer, with a grin, "it is very warm hereabouts, and I meet with plenty of old acquaintances, and altogether the place suits me. I hope to see you back again some day soon. A pleasant journey to you."

While he was speaking the bell of the engine rang, and we dashed away, after dropping a few passengers, but receiving no new ones. Rattling onward through the Valley, we were dazzled with the fiercely gleaming gas lamps, as before. But sometimes, in the dark of intense brightness, grim faces, that bore the aspect and expression of individual sins, or evil passions, seemed to thrust themselves through the veil of light, glaring upon us, and stretching forth a great, dusky hand, as if to impede our progress. I almost thought that they were my own sins that appalled me there. These were freaks of imagination—nothing more, certainly—mere delusions, which I ought to be heartily ashamed of; but all through the Dark Valley I was tormented, and pestered, and dolefully bewildered with the same kind of waking dreams. The mephitic gases of that region intoxicate the brain. As the light of natural day, however, began to struggle with the glow of the lanterns, these vain imaginations lost their vividness, and finally vanished with the first ray of sunshine that greeted our escape from the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Ere we had gone a mile beyond it I could well-nigh have taken my oath that this whole gloomy passage was a dream.

At the end of the Valley, as John Bunyan mentions, is a cavern, where, in his days, dwelt two cruel giants, Pope and Pagan, who had strewn the ground about their residence with the bones of slaughtered pilgrims. These vile old troglodytes are no longer there; but into their deserted cave another terrible giant has thrust himself, and makes it his business to seize upon honest travellers and fatten them for his table with plentiful meals of smoke, mist, moonshine, raw potatoes, and sawdust. He is a German by birth, and is called Giant Transcendentalist; but as to his form, his features, his substance, and his nature generally, it is the chief peculiarity of this huge miscreant that neither he for himself, nor anybody for him, has ever been able to describe them. As we rushed by the cavern's mouth we caught a hasty glimpse of him, looking somewhat like an ill-proportioned figure, but considerably more like a heap of fog and duskiness. He shouted after us, but in so strange a phraseology that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrighted.

It was late in the day when the train thundered into the ancient city of Vanity, where Vanity Fair is still at the height of prosperity, and exhibits an epitome of whatever is brilliant, gay and fascinating beneath the sun. As I purposed to make a considerable stay here, it

gratified me to learn that there is no longer the want of harmony between the town's people and pilgrims, which impelled the former to such lamentably mistaken measures as the persecution of Christian and the fiery martyrdom of Faithful. On the contrary, as the new railroad brings with it great trade and a constant influx of strangers, the lord of Vanity Fair is its chief patron, and the capitalists of the city are among the largest stockholders. Many passengers stop to take their pleasure or make their profit in the Fair, instead of going onward to the Celestial City. Indeed, such are the charms of the place that people often affirm it to be the true and only heaven ; stoutly contending that there is no other, that those who seek further are mere dreamers, and that, if the fabled brightness of the Celestial City lay but a bare mile beyond the gates of Vanity, they would not be fools enough to go thither. Without subscribing to these perhaps exaggerated encomiums, I can truly say that my abode in the city was mainly agreeable, and my intercourse with the inhabitants productive of much amusement and instruction.

Being naturally of a serious turn, my attention was directed to the solid advantages derivable from a residence here, rather than to the effervescent pleasures which are the grand object with too many visitants. The Christian reader, if he have had no accounts of the city later than Bunyan's time, will be surprised to hear that almost every street has its church, and that the reverend clergy are nowhere held in higher respect than at Vanity Fair. And well do they deserve such honourable estimation ; for the maxims of wisdom and virtue which fall from their lips come from as deep a spiritual source, and tend to as lofty a religious aim, as those of the sagest philosophers of old. In justification of this high praise I need only mention the names of the Rev. Mr. Shallow-deep, the Rev. Mr. Stumble-at-truth, that fine old clerical character the Rev. Mr. This-to-day, who expects shortly to resign his pulpit to the Rev. Mr. That-to-morrow ; together with the Rev. Mr. Bewilderment, the Rev. Mr. Clog-the-spirit ; and, last and greatest, the Rev. Dr. Wind-of-doctrine. The labours of these eminent divines are aided by those of innumerable lecturers, who diffuse such a various profundity, in all subjects of human or celestial science, that any man may acquire an omnigenous erudition without the trouble of even learning to read. Thus literature is etherealised by assuming for its medium the human voice ; and knowledge, depositing all its heavier particles, except, doubtless, its gold, becomes exhaled into a sound, which forthwith steals into the ever-open ear of the community. These ingenious methods constitute a sort of machinery, by which thought and study are done to every person's hand without his putting himself to the slightest inconvenience in the matter. There is another species of machine for the wholesale manufacture of individual

morality. This excellent result is effected by societies for all manner of virtuous purposes, with which a man has merely to connect himself, throwing, as it were, his quota of virtue into the common stock, and the president and directors will take care that the aggregate amount be well applied. All these, and other wonderful improvements in ethics, religion, and literature, being made plain to my comprehension by the ingenious Mr. Smooth-it-away, inspired me with a vast admiration of Vanity Fair.

It would fill a volume, in an age of pamphlets, were I to record all my observations in this great capital of human business and pleasure. There was an unlimited range of society—the powerful, the wise, the witty, and the famous in every walk of life ; princes, presidents, poets, generals, artists, actors, and philanthropists,—all making their own market at the Fair, and deeming no price too exorbitant for such commodities as hit their fancy. It was well worth one's while, even if he had no idea of buying or selling, to loiter through the bazaars and observe the various sorts of traffic that were going forward.

Some of the purchasers, I thought, made very foolish bargains. For instance, a young man having inherited a splendid fortune, laid out a considerable portion of it in the purchase of diseases, and finally spent all the rest for a heavy lot of repentance and a suit of rags. A very pretty girl bartered a heart as clear as crystal, and which seemed her most valuable possession, for another jewel of the same kind, but so worn and defaced as to be utterly worthless. In one shop there were a great many crowns of laurel and myrtle, which soldiers, authors, statesmen, and various other people pressed eagerly to buy ; some purchased these paltry wreaths with their lives, others by a toilsome servitude of years, and many sacrificed whatever was most valuable, yet finally slunk away without the crown. There was a sort of stock or script, called Conscience, which seemed to be in great demand and would purchase almost anything. Indeed, few rich commodities were to be obtained without paying a heavy sum in this particular stock, and a man's business was seldom very lucrative unless he knew precisely when and how to throw his hoard of conscience into the market. Yet, as this stock was the only thing of permanent value, whoever parted with it was sure to find himself a loser in the long run. Several of the speculations were of a questionable character. Occasionally a member of Congress recruited his pocket by the sale of his constituents ; and I was assured that public officers have often sold their country at very moderate prices. Thousands sold their happiness for a whim. Gilded chains were in great demand, and purchased with almost any sacrifice. In truth, those who desired, according to the old adage, to sell anything valuable for a song, might find customers all over

the Fair ; and there were innumerable messes of pottage, piping hot, for such as chose to buy them with their birthrights. A few articles, however, could not be found genuine at Vanity Fair. If a customer wished to renew his stock of youth the dealers offered him a set of false teeth and an auburn wig ; if he demanded peace of mind, they recommended opium or a brandy bottle

Tracts of land and golden mansions, situate in the Celestial City, were often exchanged, at very disadvantageous rates, for a few years' lease of small, dismal, inconvenient tenements in Vanity Fair. Prince Beelzebub himself took great interest in this sort of traffic, and sometimes condescended to meddle with smaller matters. I once had the pleasure to see him bargaining with a miser for his soul, which, after much ingenious skirmishing on both sides, his highness succeeded in obtaining at about the value of sixpence. The prince remarked, with a smile, that he was a loser by the transaction.

Day after day, as I walked the streets of Vanity, my manners and deportment became more and more like those of the inhabitants. The place began to seem like home ; the idea of pursuing my travels to the Celestial City was almost obliterated from my mind. I was reminded of it, however, by the sight of the same pair of simple pilgrims at whom we had laughed so heartily when Apollyon puffed smoke and steam into their faces at the commencement of our journey. There they stood, amid the densest bustle of Vanity ; the dealers offering them their purple and fine linen and jewels, the men of wit and humour gibing at them, a pair of buxom ladies ogling them askance, while the benevolent Mr. Smooth-it-away whispered some of his wisdom at their elbows, and pointed to a newly-erected temple ; but there were these worthy simpletons, making the scene look wild and monstrous, merely by their sturdy repudiation of all part in its business or pleasures.

One of them—his name was Stick-to-the-right—perceived in my face, I suppose, a species of sympathy and almost admiration, which, to my own great surprise, I could not help feeling for this pragmatic couple. It prompted him to address me.

"Sir," inquired he, with a sad, yet mild and kindly voice, "do you call yourself a pilgrim ?"

"Yes," I replied, "my right to that appellation is indubitable. I am merely a sojourner here in Vanity Fair, being bound to the Celestial City by the new railroad."

"Alas, friend," rejoined Mr. Stick-to-the-right, "I do assure you, and beseech you to receive the truth of my words, that that whole concern is a bubble. You may travel on it all your lifetime, were you to live thousands of years, and yet never get beyond the limits of Vanity Fair. Yea, though you should deem yourself entering the gates of the blessed city, it will be nothing but a miserable delusion."

"The Lord of the Celestial City," began the other pilgrim, whose name was Mr. Foot-it-to-heaven, "has refused, and will ever refuse, to grant an act of incorporation for this railroad; and, unless that be obtained, no passenger can ever hope to enter his dominions. Wherefore every man who buys a ticket, must lay his account with losing the purchase money, which is the value of his own soul."

"Poh, nonsense!" said Mr. Smooth-it-away, taking my arm and leading me off, "these fellows ought to be indicted for a libel. If the law stood as it once did in Vanity Fair we should see them grinning through the iron bars of the prison window."

This incident made a considerable impression on my mind, and contributed with other circumstances to indispose me to a permanent residence in the city of Vanity; although, of course, I was not simple enough to give up my original plan of gliding along easily and commodiously by railroad. Still, I grew anxious to be gone. There was one strange thing that troubled me. Amid the occupations or amusements of the Fair, nothing was more common than for a person—whether at feast, theatre, or church, or trafficking for wealth and honours, or whatever he might be doing, and however unseasonable the interruption—suddenly to vanish like a soap bubble, and be never more seen of his fellows; and so accustomed were the latter to such little accidents that they went on with their business as quietly as if nothing had happened. But it was otherwise with me.

Finally, after a pretty long residence at the Fair, I resumed my journey towards the Celestial City, still with Mr. Smooth-it-away at my side. At a short distance beyond the suburbs of Vanity we passed the ancient silver mine, of which Demas was the first discoverer, and which is now wrought to great advantage, supplying nearly all the coined currency of the world. A little farther onward was the spot where Lot's wife had stood for ever under the semblance of a pillar of salt. Curious travellers have long since carried it away piecemeal. Had all regrets been punished as rigorously as this poor dame's were, my yearning for the relinquished delights of Vanity Fair might have produced a similar change in my own corporeal substance, and left me a warning to future pilgrims.

The next remarkable object was a large edifice, constructed of moss-grown stone, but in a modern and airy style of architecture. The engine came to a pause in its vicinity, with the usual tremendous shriek.

"This was formerly the castle of the redoubted giant Despair," observed Mr. Smooth-it-away; "but since his death Mr. Flimsy-faith has repaired it, and keeps an excellent house of entertainment here. It is one of our stopping-places."

"It seems but slightly put together," remarked I, looking at the

frail yet ponderous walls. "I do not envy Mr. Flimsy-faith his habitation. Some day it will thunder down upon the heads of the occupants."

"We shall escape, at all events," said Mr. Smooth-it-away, "for Apollyon is putting on the steam again."

The road now plunged into a gorge of the Delectable Mountains, and traversed the field where in former ages the blind men wandered and stumbled among the tombs. One of these ancient tombstones had been thrust across the track by some malicious person, and gave the train of cars a terrible jolt. Far up the rugged side of a mountain I perceived a rusty iron door, half overgrown with bushes and creeping plants, but with smoke issuing from its crevices.

"Is that," inquired I, "the very door in the hillside which the shepherds assured Christian was a byway to hell?"

"That was a joke on the part of the shepherds," said Mr. Smooth-it-away, with a smile. "It is neither more nor less than the door of a cavern which they use as a smoke house for the preparation of mutton hams."

My recollections of the journey are now, for a little space, dim and confused, inasmuch as a singular drowsiness here overcame me, owing to the fact that we were passing over the Enchanted Ground, the air of which encourages a disposition to sleep. I awoke, however, as soon as we crossed the borders of the pleasant land of Beulah. All the passengers were rubbing their eyes, comparing watches, and congratulating one another on the prospect of arriving so seasonably at the journey's end. The sweet breezes of this happy clime came refreshingly to our nostrils; we beheld the glimmering gush of silver fountains, overhung by trees of beautiful foliage and delicious fruit, which were propagated by grafts from the celestial gardens. Once, as we dashed onward like a hurricane, there was a flutter of wings and the bright appearance of an angel in the air, speeding forth on some heavenly mission. The engine now announced the close vicinity of the final station-house by one last and horrible scream, in which there seemed to be distinguishable every kind of wailing and woe, and bitter fierceness of wrath, all mixed up with the wild laughter of a devil or a madman. Throughout our journey, at every stopping-place, Apollyon had exercised his ingenuity in screwing the most abominable sounds out of the whistle of the steam engine; but in this closing effort he outdid himself and created an infernal uproar, which, besides disturbing the peaceful inhabitants of Beulah, must have sent its discord even through the celestial gates.

While the horrid clamour was still ringing in our ears we heard an exulting strain, as if a thousand instruments of music, with height, and depth, and sweetness in their tones, at once tender and

triumphant, were struck in unison, to greet the approach of some illustrious hero, who had fought the good fight and won a glorious victory, and was come to lay aside his battered arms for ever. Looking to ascertain what might be the occasion of this glad harmony, I perceived, on alighting from the cars, that a multitude of shining ones had assembled on the other side of the river, to welcome two poor pilgrims, who were just emerging from its depths. They were the same whom Apollyon and ourselves had persecuted with taunts, and gibes, and scalding steam at the commencement of our journey—the same whose unworldly aspect and impressive words had stirred my conscience amid the wild revellers of Vanity Fair.

"How amazingly well those men have got on," cried I to Mr. Smooth-it-away. "I wish we were secure of as good a reception."

"Never fear, never fear!" answered my friend. "Come, make haste: the ferry-boat will be off directly, and in three minutes you will be on the other side of the river. No doubt you will find coaches to carry you up to the city gates."

A steam ferry-boat, the last improvement on this important route, lay at the river-side, puffing, snorting, and emitting all those other disagreeable utterances which betoken the departure to be immediate, I hurried on board with the rest of the passengers, most of whom were in great perturbation; some bawling out for their baggage; some tearing their hair and exclaiming that the boat would explode or sink; some already pale with the heaving of the stream; some gazing affrighted at the ugly aspect of the steersman; and some still dizzy with the slumberous influences of the Enchanted Ground. Looking back to the shore, I was amazed to discern Mr. Smooth-it-away waving his hand in token of farewell.

"Don't you go over to the Celestial City?" exclaimed I.

"Oh, no!" answered he with a queer smile, and that same disagreeable contortion of visage which I had remarked in the inhabitants of the Dark Valley. "Oh, no! I have come thus far only for the sake of your pleasant company. Good-bye! We shall meet again!"

And then did my excellent friend, Mr. Smooth-it-away, laugh outright, in the midst of which cachinnation a smoke-wreath issued from his mouth and nostrils, while a twinkle of lurid flame darted out of either eye, proving indubitably that his heart was all of a red blaze. The impudent fiend! To deny the existence of Tophet, when he felt its fiery tortures raging within his breast. I rushed to the side of the boat, intending to fling myself on the shore; but the wheels, as they began their revolutions, threw a dash of spray over me so cold—so deadly cold, with the chill that will never leave those waters until Death be drowned in his own river—that, with a shiver and a heart-quake, I awoke. Thank heaven it was a Dream!

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

DR. HEIDEGGER'S EXPERIMENT

THAT very singular man, old Dr. Heidegger, once invited four venerable friends to meet him in his study. There were three white-bearded gentlemen, Mr. Medbourne, Colonel Killigrew, and Mr. Gascoigne, and a withered gentlewoman, whose name was the Widow Wycherly.

They were all melancholy old creatures, who had been unfortunate in life, and whose greatest misfortune it was that they were not long ago in their graves. Mr. Medbourne, in the vigour of his age, had been a prosperous merchant, but had lost his all by a frantic speculation, and was now little better than a mendicant. Colonel Killigrew had wasted his best years, and his health and substance, in the pursuit of sinful pleasures, which had given birth to a brood of pains, such as the gout, and divers other torments of soul and body. Mr. Gascoigne was a ruined politician, a man of evil fame, or at least had been so, till time had buried him from the knowledge of the present generation, and made him obscure instead of infamous. As for the Widow Wycherly, tradition tells us that she was a great beauty in her day ; but for a long while past she had lived in deep seclusion, on account of certain scandalous stories, which had prejudiced the gentry of the town against her.

It is a circumstance worth mentioning, that each of these three old gentlemen, Mr. Medbourne, Colonel Killigrew, and Mr. Gascoigne, were early lovers of the Widow Wycherly, and had once been on the point of cutting each other's throats for her sake. And, before proceeding further, I will merely hint that Dr. Heidegger and all his four guests were sometimes thought to be a little beside themselves ; as is not unfrequently the case with old people when worried either by present troubles or woeful recollections.

"My dear old friends," said Dr. Heidegger, motioning them to be seated, " I am desirous of your assistance in one of those little experiments with which I amuse myself here in my study."

If all stories were true, Dr. Heidegger's study must have been a very curious place. It was a dim, old-fashioned chamber, festooned with cobwebs, and besprinkled with antique dust. Around the walls stood several open bookcases, the lower shelves of which were filled with rows of gigantic folios and black-letter quartos, and the upper with little parchment-covered duodecimos. Over the central bookcase was a bronze bust of Hippocrates, with which, according to some authorities, Dr. Heidegger was accustomed to hold consultations in all difficult cases of his practice. In the obscurest corner of the room stood a tall and narrow oaken closet, with its door ajar, within which doubtfully appeared a skeleton. Between two of the bookcases hung a looking-glass, presenting its high and dusty plate within a tarnished gilt frame.

Among many wonderful stories related of this mirror, it was fabled that the spirits of all the doctor's deceased patients dwelt within its verge, and would stare him in the face whenever he looked thitherward. The opposite side of the chamber was ornamented with the full-length portrait of a young lady, arrayed in the faded magnificence of silk, satin, and brocade, and with a visage as faded as her dress. Above half a century ago Dr. Heidegger had been on the point of marriage with this young lady ; but, being affected with some slight disorder, she had swallowed one of her lover's prescriptions, and died on the bridal evening.

The greatest curiosity of the study remains to be mentioned ; it was a ponderous folio volume, bound in black leather, with massive silver clasps. There were no letters on the back, and nobody could tell the title of the book. But it was well known to be a book of magic ; and once, when a chambermaid had lifted it merely to brush away the dust, the skeleton had rattled in its closet, the picture of the young lady had stepped one foot upon the floor, and several ghastly faces had peeped forth from the mirror ; while the brazen head of Hippocrates frowned and said—" Forbear ! "

Such was Dr. Heidegger's study. On the summer afternoon of our tale, a small round table, as black as ebony, stood in the centre of the room, sustaining a cut glass vase of beautiful form and elaborate workmanship. The sunshine came through the window, between the heavy festoons of two faded damask curtains, and fell directly across this vase ; so that a mild splendour was reflected from it on the ashen visages of the five old people who sat around. Four champagne glasses were also on the table.

" My dear old friends," repeated Dr. Heidegger, " may I reckon on your aid in performing an exceedingly curious experiment ? "

Now Dr. Heidegger was a very strange old gentleman, whose eccentricity had become the nucleus for a thousand fantastic stories. Some of these fables, to my shame be it spoken, might

possibly be traced back to mine own veracious self ; and if any passages of the present tale should startle the reader's faith, I must be content to bear the stigma of a fiction-monger.

When the doctor's four guests heard him talk of his proposed experiment they anticipated nothing more wonderful than the murder of a mouse in an air-pump, or the examination of a cobweb by the microscope, or some similar nonsense, with which he was constantly in the habit of pestering his intimates. But without waiting for reply, Dr. Heidegger hobbled across the chamber, and returned with the same ponderous folio, bound in black leather, which common report affirmed to be a book of magic. Undoing the silver clasps, he opened the volume, and took from among its black-letter pages a rose, or what was once a rose, though now the green leaves and crimson petals had assumed one brownish hue, and the ancient flower seemed ready to crumble to dust in the doctor's hands.

"This rose," said Dr. Heidegger with a sigh, "this same withered and crumbling flower, blossomed five-and-fifty years ago. It was given me by Sylvia Ward, whose portrait hangs yonder ; and I meant to wear it in my bosom at our wedding. Five-and-fifty years it has been treasured between the leaves of this old volume. Now would you deem it possible that this rose of half a century could ever bloom again ? "

"Nonsense !" said the Widow Wycherly, with a peevish toss of her head. "You might as well ask whether an old woman's wrinkled face could ever bloom again."

"See !" answered Dr. Heidegger.

He uncovered the vase, and threw the faded rose into the water which it contained. At first it lay lightly on the surface of the fluid, appearing to imbibe none of its moisture. Soon, however, a singular change began to be visible. The crushed and dried petals stirred, and assumed a deepening tinge of crimson, as if the flower were reviving from a death-like slumber ; the slender stalks and twigs of foliage became green ; and there was the rose of half a century looking as fresh as when Sylvia Ward had first given it to her lover. It was scarcely full blown, for some of its delicate red leaves curled modestly around its moist bosom, within which two or three dew-drops were sparkling.

"That is certainly a very pretty deception," said the doctor's friends, carelessly, however, for they had witnessed greater miracles at a conjuror's show ; "pray, how was it effected ? "

"Did you ever hear of the 'Fountain of Youth,' " asked Dr. Heidegger, "which Ponce de Leon, the Spanish adventurer, went in search of two or three centuries ago ? "

"But did Ponce de Leon ever find it ? " said the Widow Wycherly.

"No," answered Dr. Heidegger, "for he never sought it in the right place. The famous Fountain of Youth, if I am rightly informed, is situated in the southern part of the Floridian peninsula, not far from Lake Macaco. Its source is overshadowed by several gigantic magnolias, which, though numberless centuries old, have been kept as fresh as violets by the virtues of this wonderful water. An acquaintance of mine, knowing my curiosity in such matters, has sent me what you see in the vase."

"Ahem!" said Colonel Killigrew, who believed not a word of the doctor's story; "and what may be the effect of this fluid on the human frame?"

"You shall judge for yourself, my dear Colonel," replied Dr. Heidegger; "and all of you, my respected friends, are welcome to so much of this admirable fluid as may restore to you the bloom of youth. For my own part, having had much trouble in growing old, I am in no hurry to grow young again. With your permission, therefore, I will merely watch the progress of the experiment."

While he spoke, Dr. Heidegger had been filling the four champagne glasses with the water of the Fountain of Youth. It was apparently impregnated with an effervescent gas, for little bubbles were continually ascending from the depths of the glasses, and bursting in silvery spray at the surface. As the liquor diffused a pleasant perfume, the old people doubted not that it possessed cordial and comfortable properties; and though utter sceptics as to its rejuvenescent power, they were inclined to swallow it at once. But Dr. Heidegger besought them to stay a moment.

"Before you drink, my respectable old friends," said he, "it would be well that, with the experience of a lifetime to direct you, you should draw up a few general rules for your guidance, in passing a second time through the perils of youth. Think what a sin and shame it would be, if, with your peculiar advantage, you should not become patterns of virtue and wisdom to all the young people of the age!"

The doctor's four venerable friends made him no answer, except by a feeble and tremulous laugh; so very ridiculous was the idea, that, knowing how closely repentance treads behind the steps of error, they should ever go astray again.

"Drink, then," said the doctor, bowing; "I rejoice that I have so well selected the subjects of my experiment."

With palsied hands they raised the glasses to their lips. The liquor, if it really possessed such virtues as Dr. Heidegger imputed to it, could not have been bestowed on four human beings who needed it more woefully. They looked as if they had never known what youth or pleasure was, but had been the offspring of Nature's dotage, and always the grey, decrepit, sapless, miserable creatures,

who now sat stooping around the doctor's table, without life enough in their souls or bodies to be animated even by the prospect of growing young again. They drank off the water, and replaced their glasses on the table.

Assuredly there was an almost immediate improvement in the aspect of the party, not unlike what might have been produced by a glass of generous wine, together with a sudden glow of cheerful sunshine brightening over all their visages at once. There was a healthful suffusion on their cheeks, instead of the ashen hue that had made them look so corpse-like. They gazed at one another, and fancied that some magic power had really begun to smooth away the deep and sad inscriptions which Father Time had been so long engraving on their brows. The Widow Wycherly adjusted her cap, for she felt almost like a woman again.

"Give us more of this wondrous water!" cried they, eagerly. "We are younger—but we are still too old. Quick—give us more!"

"Patience, patience!" quoth Dr. Heidegger, who sat watching the experiment with philosophic coolness. "You have been a long time growing old. Surely you might be content to grow young in half an hour! But the water is at your service."

Again he filled their glasses with the liquor of youth, enough of which still remained in the vase to turn half the old people in the city to the age of their own grandchildren. While the bubbles were yet sparkling on the brim, the doctor's four guests snatched their glasses from the table, and swallowed the contents at a single gulp. Was it delusion? Even while the draught was passing down their throats, it seemed to have wrought a change on their whole systems. Their eyes grew clear and bright, a dark shade deepened among their silvery locks; they sat around the table, three gentlemen of middle age, and a woman hardly beyond her buxom prime.

"My dear widow, you are charming!" cried Colonel Killigrew, whose eyes had been fixed upon her face, while the shadows of age were flitting from it like darkness from the crimson daybreak.

The fair widow knew, of old, that Colonel Killigrew's compliments were not always measured by sober truth; so she started up and ran to the mirror, still dreading that the ugly visage of an old woman would meet her gaze. Meanwhile, the three gentlemen behaved in such a manner as proved that the water of the Fountain of Youth possessed some intoxicating qualities; unless, indeed, their exhilaration of spirits were merely a lightsome dizziness, caused by the sudden removal of the weight of years. Mr. Gascoigne's mind seemed to run on political topics, but whether relating to the past, present, or future, could not easily be determined

since the same ideas and phrases have been in vogue these fifty years. Now he rattled forth full-throated sentences about patriotism, national glory, and the people's right ; now he muttered some perilous stuff or other, in a sly and doubtful whisper, so cautiously that even his own conscience could scarcely catch the secret ; and now, again, he spoke in measured accents, and a deeply deferential tone, as if a royal ear were listening to his well-turned periods. Colonel Killigrew all this time had been troling forth a jolly bottle-song, and ringing his glass in symphony with the chorus, while his eyes wandered toward the buxom figure of the Widow Wycherly. On the other side of the table Mr. Medbourne was involved in a calculation of dollars and cents, with which was strangely intermingled a project for supplying the East Indies with ice, by harnessing a team of whales to the polar icebergs.

As for the Widow Wycherly, she stood before the mirror curtsying and simpering to her own image, and greeting it as the friend whom she loved better than all the world beside. She thrust her face close to the glass, to see whether some long-remembered wrinkle or crow's foot had indeed vanished. She examined whether the snow had so entirely melted from her hair that the venerable cap could be safely thrown aside. At last, turning briskly away, she came with a sort of dancing step to the table.

" My dear old doctor," cried she, " pray favour me with another glass ! "

" Certainly, my dear madam, certainly ! " replied the complaisant doctor ; " see ! I have already filled the glasses."

There, in fact, stood the four glasses, brimful of this wonderful water, the delicate spray of which, as it effervesced from the surface, resembled the tremulous glitter of diamonds. It was now so nearly sunset that the chamber had grown duskier than ever ; but a mild and moonlight splendour gleamed from within the vase, and rested alike on the four guests, and on the doctor's venerable figure. He sat in a high-backed, elaborately carved oaken armchair, with a grave dignity of aspect that might have well befitted that very Father Time whose power had never been disputed, save by this fortunate company. Even while quaffing the third draught of the Fountain of Youth they were almost awed by the expression of his mysterious visage.

But, the next moment, the exhilarating gush of young life shot through their veins. They were now in the happy prime of youth. Age, with its miserable train of cares, and sorrows, and diseases, was remembered only as the trouble of a dream, from which they had joyously awoke. The fresh gloss of the soul, so early lost, and without which the world's successive scenes had been but a gallery of faded pictures, again threw its enchantment over all

their prospects. They felt like new-created beings in a new-created universe.

"We are young! We are young!" they cried, exultingly.

Youth, like the extremity of age, had effaced the strongly marked characteristics of middle life, and mutually assimilated them all. They were a group of merry youngsters, almost maddened with the exuberant frolicsomeness of their years. The most singular effect of their gaiety was an impulse to mock the infirmity and decrepitude of which they had so lately been the victims. They laughed loudly at their old-fashioned attire, the wide-skirted coats and flapped waistcoats of the young men, and the ancient cap and gown of the blooming girl. One limped across the floor like a gouty grandfather; one set a pair of spectacles astride of his nose, and pretended to pore over the black-letter pages of the book of magic; a third seated himself in an armchair, and strove to imitate the venerable dignity of Dr. Heidegger. Then all shouted mirthfully and leaped about the room. The Widow Wycherly—if so fresh a damsel could be called a widow—tripped up to the doctor's chair, with a mischievous merriment in her rosy face.

"Doctor, you dear old soul," cried she, "get up and dance with me!" And then the four young people laughed louder than ever, to think what a queer figure the poor old doctor would cut.

"Pray excuse me," answered the doctor, quietly. "I am old and rheumatic, and my dancing days were over long ago. But either of these gay young gentlemen will be glad of so pretty a partner."

"Dance with me, Clara," cried Colonel Killigrew.

"No, no, I will be her partner!" cried Mr. Gascoigne.

"She promised me her hand fifty years ago!" exclaimed Mr. Medbourne.

They all gathered round her. One caught both her hands in his passionate grasp—another threw his arms about her waist—the third buried his hands among the glossy curls that clustered beneath the widow's cap. Blushing, panting, struggling, chiding, laughing, her warm breath fanning each of their faces by turn, she strove to disengage herself, yet still remained in their triple embrace. Never was there a livelier picture of youthful rivalry, with bewitching beauty for the prize. Yet, by a strange deception, owing to the duskiness of the chamber, and the antique dresses which they still wore, the tall mirror is said to have reflected the figures of the three old, grey, withered grandsires, ridiculously contending for the skinny ugliness of a shrivelled grandam.

But they were young: their burning passions proved them so. Inflamed to madness by the coquetry of the girl-widow, who neither granted nor quite withheld her favours, the three rivals began to

interchange threatening glances. Still keeping hold of the fair prize, they grappled fiercely at one another's throats. As they struggled to and fro, the table was overturned, and the vase dashed into a thousand fragments. The precious Water of Youth flowed in a bright stream across the floor, moistening the wings of a butterfly, which, grown old in the decline of summer, had alighted there to die. The insect fluttered lightly through the chamber, and settled on the snowy head of Dr. Heidegger.

"Come, come, gentlemen!—come, Madame Wycherly," exclaimed the doctor, "I really must protest against this riot."

They stood still, and shivered; for it seemed as if grey Time were calling them back from their sunny youth, far down into the chill and darksome vale of years. They looked at old Dr. Heidegger, who sat in his carved armchair, holding the rose of half a century, which he had rescued from among the fragments of the shattered vase. At the motion of his hand the four rioters resumed their seats; the more readily, because their violent exertions had wearied them, youthful though they were.

"My poor Sylvia's rose!" ejaculated Dr. Heidegger, holding it to the light of the sunset clouds; "it appears to be fading again."

And so it was. Even while the party were looking at it the flower continued to shrivel up, till it became as dry and fragile as when the doctor had first thrown it into the vase. He shook off the few drops of moisture which clung to its petals.

"I love it as well thus as in its dewy freshness," observed he, pressing the withered rose to his withered lips. While he spoke, the butterfly fluttered down from the doctor's snowy head and fell upon the floor.

His guests shivered again. A strange chilliness, whether of the body or spirit they could not tell, was creeping gradually over them all. They gazed at one another, and fancied that each fleeting moment snatched away a charm, and left a deepening furrow where none had been before. Was it an illusion? Had the changes of a lifetime been crowded into so brief a space, and were they now four aged people, sitting with their old friend, Dr. Heidegger?

"Are we grown old again so soon?" cried they, dolefully.

In truth, they had. The Water of Youth possessed merely a virtue more transient than that of wine. The delirium which it created had effervesced away. Yes! they were old again. With a shuddering impulse, that showed her a woman still, the widow clasped her skinny hands before her face, and wished that the coffin-lid were over it, since it could be no longer beautiful.

"Yes, friends, ye are old again," said Dr. Heidegger, "and lo! the Water of Youth is all lavished on the ground. Well—I bemoan

it not ! for if the fountain gushed at my very doorstep I would not stoop to bathe my lips in it—no, though its delirium were for years instead of moments. Such is the lesson you have taught me ! ”

But the doctor's four friends had taught no such lesson to themselves. They resolved forthwith to make a pilgrimage to Florida, and quaff at morning, noon, and night, from the Fountain of Youth.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

EDWARD RANDOLPH'S PORTRAIT

IN one of the apartments of the Province House there was long preserved an ancient picture, the frame of which was as black as ebony, and the canvas itself so dark with age, damp, and smoke, that not a touch of the painter's art could be discerned. Time had thrown an impenetrable veil over it, and left to tradition, and fable, and conjecture, to say what had once been there portrayed. During the rule of many successive governors, it had hung, by prescriptive and undisputed right, over the mantelpiece of the same chamber ; and it still kept its place when Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson assumed the administration of the province, on the departure of Sir Francis Bernard.

The Lieutenant-Governor sat, one afternoon, resting his head against the carved back of his stately arm-chair, and gazing up thoughtfully at the void blackness of the picture. It was scarcely a time for such inactive musing, when affairs of the deepest moment required the ruler's decision ; for, within that very hour, Hutchinson had received intelligence of the arrival of a British fleet, bringing three regiments from Halifax to overawe the insubordination of the people. These troops awaited his permission to occupy the fortress of Castle William, and the town itself. Yet, instead of affixing his signature to an official order, there sat the Lieutenant-Governor, so carefully scrutinising the black waste of canvas that his demeanour attracted the notice of two young persons who attended him. One, wearing a military dress of buff, was his kinsman, Francis Lincoln, the Provincial Captain of Castle William ; the other, who sat on a low stool beside his chair, was Alice Vane, his favourite niece.

She was clad entirely in white, a pale, ethereal creature, who, though a native of New England, had been educated abroad, and seemed not merely a stranger from another clime, but almost a being from another world. For several years, until left an orphan,

she had dwelt with her father in sunny Italy, and there had acquired a taste and enthusiasm for sculpture and painting, which she found few opportunities of gratifying in the undecorated dwellings of the colonial gentry. It was said that the early productions of her own pencil exhibited no inferior genius, though, perhaps, the rude atmosphere of New England had cramped her hand, and dimmed the glowing colours of her fancy. But, observing her uncle's steadfast gaze, which appeared to search through the mist of years to discover the subject of the picture, her curiosity was excited.

"Is it known, my dear uncle," inquired she, "what this old picture once represented? Possibly, could it be made visible, it might prove a masterpiece of some great artist—else why has it so long held such a conspicuous place?"

As her uncle, contrary to his usual custom (for he was as attentive to all the humours and caprices of Alice as if she had been his own best-beloved child), did not immediately reply, the young Captain of Castle William took that office upon himself.

"This dark old square of canvas, my fair cousin," said he, "has been an heirloom in the Province House from time immemorial. As to the painter, I can tell you nothing; but, if half the stories told of it be true, not one of the great Italian masters has ever produced so marvellous a piece of work as that before you."

Captain Lincoln proceeded to relate some of the strange fables and fantasies which, as it was impossible to refute them by ocular demonstration, had grown to be articles of popular belief in reference to this old picture. One of the wildest, and at the same time the best-accredited accounts, stated it to be an original and authentic portrait of the Evil One, taken at a witch-meeting near Salem; and that its strong and terrible resemblance had been confirmed by several of the confessing wizards and witches, at their trial, in open court. It was likewise affirmed that a familiar spirit, or demon, abode behind the blackness of the picture, and had shown himself, at seasons of public calamity, to more than one of the royal governors. Shirley, for instance, had beheld this ominous apparition, on the eve of General Abercrombie's shameful and bloody defeat under the walls of Ticonderago. Many of the servants of the Province House had caught glimpses of a visage frowning down upon them, at morning or evening twilight—or in the depths of night, while raking up the fire that glimmered on the hearth beneath; although, if any were bold enough to hold a torch before the picture, it would appear as black and undistinguishable as ever. The oldest inhabitant of Boston recollected that his father, in whose days the portrait had not wholly faded out of sight, had once looked upon it, but would never suffer himself to be questioned as to the face which was there represented. In connection with such stories,

it was remarkable that over the top of the frame there were some ragged remnants of black silk, indicating that a veil had formerly hung down before the picture, until the duskiness of time had so effectually concealed it. But, after all, it was the most singular part of the affair that so many of the pompous governors of Massachusetts had allowed the obliterated picture to remain in the state-chamber of the Province House.

"Some of these fables are really awful," observed Alice Vane, who had occasionally shuddered, as well as smiled, while her cousin spoke. "It would be almost worth while to wipe away the black surface of the canvas, since the original picture can hardly be so formidable as those which fancy paints instead of it."

"But would it be possible," inquired her cousin, "to restore this dark picture to its pristine hues?"

"Such arts are known in Italy," said Alice.

The Lieutenant-Governor had roused himself from his abstracted mood, and listened with a smile to the conversation of his young relatives. Yet his voice had something peculiar in its tones, when he undertook the explanation of the mystery.

"I am sorry, Alice, to destroy your faith in the legends of which you are so fond," remarked he; "but my antiquarian researches have long since made me acquainted with the subject of this picture—if picture it can be called—which is no more visible, nor ever will be, than the face of the long-buried man whom it once represented. It was the portrait of Edward Randolph, the founder of this house, a person famous in the history of New England."

"Of that Edward Randolph," exclaimed Captain Lincoln, "who obtained the repeal of the first provincial charter, under which our forefathers had enjoyed almost democratic privileges! He that was styled the arch-enemy of New England, and whose memory is still held in detestation, as the destroyer of our liberties!"

"It was the same Randolph," answered Hutchinson, moving uneasily in his chair. "It was his lot to taste the bitterness of popular odium."

"Our annals tell us," continued the Captain of Castle William, "that the curse of the people followed this Randolph wherever he went, and wrought evil in all the subsequent events of his life, and that its effect was seen likewise in the manner of his death. They say, too, that the inward misery of that curse worked itself outward, and was visible on the wretched man's countenance, making it too horrible to be looked upon. If so, and if this picture truly represented his aspect, it was in mercy that the cloud of blackness has gathered over it."

"These traditions are folly, to one who have proved, as I have, how little of historic truth lies at the bottom," said the

Lieutenant-Governor. "As regards the life and character of Edward Randolph too implicit credence has been given to Dr. Cotton Mather, who—I must say it, though some of his blood runs in my veins—has filled our early history with old women's tales, as fanciful and extravagant as those of Greece or Rome."

"And yet," whispered Alice Vane, "may not such fables have a moral? And, methinks, if the visage of this portrait be so dreadful, it is not without a cause that it had hung so long in a chamber of the Province House. When the rulers feel themselves irresponsible, it were well that they should be reminded of the awful weight of a people's curse."

The Lieutenant-Governor started, and gazed for a moment at his niece, as if her girlish fantasies had struck upon some feeling in his own breast, which all his policy or principles could not entirely subdue. He knew, indeed, that Alice, in spite of her foreign education, retained the native sympathies of a New England girl.

"Peace, silly child," cried he, at last, more harshly than he had ever before addressed the gentle Alice. "The rebuke of a king is more to be dreaded than the clamour of a wild, misguided multitude. Captain Lincoln, it is decided. The fortress of Castle William must be occupied by the royal troops. The two remaining regiments shall be billeted in the town, or encamped upon the Common. It is time, after years of tumult, and almost rebellion, that His Majesty's government should have a wall of strength about it."

"Trust, sir—trust yet awhile to the loyalty of the people," said Captain Lincoln; "nor teach them that they can ever be on other terms with British soldiers than those of brotherhood, as when they fought side by side through the French war. Do not convert the streets of your native town into a camp. Think twice before you give up old Castle William, the key of the province, into other keeping than that of true-born New Englanders."

"Young man, it is decided," repeated Hutchinson, rising from his chair. "A British officer will be in attendance this evening, to receive the necessary instructions for the disposal of the troops. Your presence also will be required. Till then, farewell."

With these words the Lieutenant-Governor hastily left the room, while Alice and her cousin more slowly followed, whispering together, and once pausing to glance back at the mysterious picture. The Captain of Castle William fancied that the girl's air and mien were such as might have belonged to one of those spirits of fable—fairies, or creatures of a more antique mythology,—who sometimes mingled their agency with mortal affairs, half in caprice, yet with a sensibility to human weal or woe. As he held the door for her to pass, Alice beckoned to the picture and smiled.

"Come forth, dark and evil Shape," cried she. "It is thine hour!"

In the evening, Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson sat in the same chamber where the foregoing scene had occurred, surrounded by several persons whose various interests had summoned them together. There were the Select men of Boston, plain, patriarchal fathers of the people, excellent representatives of the old puritanical founders, whose sombre strength had stamped so deep an impress upon the New England character. Contrasting with these were one or two members of Council, richly dressed in the white wigs, the embroidered waistcoats, and other magnificence of the time, and making a somewhat ostentatious display of courtier-like ceremonial. In attendance, likewise, was a major of the British army, awaiting the Lieutenant-Governor's orders for the landing of the troops, which still remained on board the transports. The Captain of Castle William stood beside Hutchinson's chair, with folded arms, glancing rather haughtily at the British officer, by whom he was soon to be superseded in his command. On a table, in the centre of the chamber, stood a branched silver candlestick, throwing down the glow of half a dozen wax-lights upon a paper apparently ready for the Lieutenant-Governor's signature.

Partly shrouded in the voluminous folds of one of the window-curtains, which fell from the ceiling to the floor, was seen the white drapery of a lady's robe. It may appear strange that Alice Vane should have been there, at such a time; but there was something so childlike, so wayward, in her singular character, so apart from ordinary rules, that her presence did not surprise the few who noticed it. Meantime, the chairman of the Select men was addressing to the Lieutenant-Governor a long and solemn protest against the reception of the British troops into the town.

"And if your Honour," concluded this excellent but somewhat prosy old gentleman, "shall see fit to persist in bringing these mercenary swordsmen and musketeers into our quiet streets, not on our heads be the responsibility. Think, sir, while there is yet time, that if one drop of blood be shed, that blood shall be an eternal stain upon your Honour's memory. You, sir, have written, with an able pen, the deeds of our forefathers. The more to be desired is it, therefore, that yourself should deserve honourable mention, as a true patriot and upright ruler, when your own doings shall be written down in history."

"I am not insensible, my good sir, to the natural desire to stand well in the annals of my country," replied Hutchinson, controlling his impatience into courtesy, "nor know I any better method of attaining that end than by withstanding the merely temporary spirit of mischief, which, with your pardon, seems to have infected

older men than myself. Would you have me wait till the mob shall sack the Province House, as they did my private mansion? Trust me, sir, the time may come when you will be glad to flee for protection to the King's banner, the raising of which is now so distasteful to you."

"Yes," said the British major, who was impatiently expecting the Lieutenant-Governor's orders. "The demagogues of this province have raised the devil, and cannot lay him again. We will exorcise him, in God's name and the King's."

"If you meddle with the devil, take care of his claws!" answered the Captain of Castle William, stirred by the taunt against his countrymen.

"Craving your pardon, young sir," said the venerable Select man, "let not an evil spirit enter into your words. We will strive against the oppressor with prayer and fasting, as our forefathers would have done. Like them, moreover, we will submit to whatever lot a wise Providence may send us,—always after our own best exertions to amend it."

"And there peep forth the devil's claws!" muttered Hutchinson, who well understood the nature of Puritan submission. "This matter shall be expedited forthwith. When there shall be a sentinel at every corner, and a court of guard before the town-house, a loyal gentleman may venture to walk abroad. What to me is the outcry of a mob, in this remote province of the realm? The King is my master, and England is my country! Upheld by their armed strength, I set my foot upon the rabble, and defy them!"

He snatched a pen, and was about to affix his signature to the paper that lay on the table, when the Captain of Castle William placed his hand upon his shoulder. The freedom of the action, so contrary to the ceremonious respect which was then considered due to rank and dignity, awakened general surprise, and in none more than the Lieutenant-Governor himself. Looking angrily up, he perceived that his young relative was pointing his finger to the opposite wall. Hutchinson's eye followed the signal; and he saw, what had hitherto been unobserved, that a black silk curtain was suspended before the mysterious picture, so as completely to conceal it. His thoughts immediately recurred to the scene of the preceding afternoon; and, in his surprise, confused by indistinct emotions, yet sensible that his niece must have had an agency in this phenomenon, he called loudly upon her.

"Alice!—come hither, Alice!"

No sooner had he spoken than Alice Vane glided from her station, and pressing one hand across her eyes, with the other snatched away the sable curtain that concealed the portrait. An exclamation of

surprise burst from every beholder ; but the Lieutenant-Governor's voice had a tone of horror.

"By heaven," said he, in a low, inward murmur, speaking rather to himself than to those around him, "if the spirit of Edward Randolph were to appear among us from the place of torment, he could not wear more of the terrors of hell upon his face !"

"For some wise end," said the aged Select man, solemnly, "hath Providence scattered away the mist of years that had so long hid this dreadful effigy. Until this hour no living man hath seen what we behold !"

Within the antique frame, which so recently had enclosed a sable waste of canvas, now appeared a visible picture, still dark, indeed, in its hues and shadings, but thrown forward in strong relief. It was a half-length figure of a gentleman in a rich, but very old-fashioned dress of embroidered velvet, with a broad ruff and a beard, and wearing a hat, the brim of which overshadowed his forehead. Beneath this cloud the eyes had a peculiar glare, which was almost life-like. The whole portrait started so distinctly out of the background, that it had the effect of a person looking down from the wall at the astonished and awe-stricken spectators. The expression of the face, if any words can convey an idea of it, was that of a wretch detected in some hideous guilt, and exposed to the bitter hatred, and laughter, and withering scorn, of a vast surrounding multitude. There was the struggle of defiance, beaten down and overwhelmed by the crushing weight of ignominy. The torture of the soul had come forth upon the countenance. It seemed as if the picture, while hidden behind the cloud of immemorial years, had been all the time acquiring an intenser depth and darkness of expression, till now it gloomed forth again, and threw its evil omen over the present hour. Such, if the wild legend may be credited, was the portrait of Edward Randolph, as he appeared when a people's curse had wrought its influence upon his nature.

"'Twould drive me mad—that awful face !" said Hutchinson, who seemed fascinated by the contemplation of it.

"Be warned, then !" whispered Alice. "He trampled on a people's rights. Behold his punishment—and avoid a crime like his !"

The Lieutenant-Governor actually trembled for an instant ; but, exerting his energy—which was not, however, his most characteristic feature—he strove to shake off the spell of Randolph's countenance.

"Girl !" cried he, laughing bitterly, as he turned to Alice, "have you brought hither your painter's art—your Italian spirit of intrigue—your tricks of stage-effect—and think to influence the counsels of rulers and the affairs of nations by such shallow contrivances ? See here !"

"Stay yet awhile," said the Select man, as Hutchinson again snatched the pen; "for, if ever mortal man received a warning from a tormented soul, your Honour is that man!"

"Away!" answered Hutchinson, fiercely. "Though yonder senseless picture cried 'Forbear!' it should not move me!"

Casting a scowl of defiance at the pictured face (which seemed, at that moment, to intensify the horror of its miserable and wicked look) he scrawled on the paper, in characters that betokened it a deed of desperation, the name of Thomas Hutchinson. Then, it is said, he shuddered, as if that signature had granted away his salvation.

"It is done," said he; and placed his hand upon his brow.

"May Heaven forgive the deed," said the soft, sad accents of Alice Vane, like the voice of a good spirit flitting away.

When morning came, there was a stifled whisper through the household, and spreading thence about the town, that the dark, mysterious picture had started from the wall, and spoken face to face with Lieutenant-Governor Hutchinson. If such a miracle had been wrought, however, no traces of it remained behind; for, within the antique frame, nothing could be discerned, save the impenetrable cloud, which had covered the canvas since the memory of man. If the figure had, indeed, stepped forth, it had fled back, spirit-like, at the day-dawn, and hidden itself behind a century's obscurity. The truth probably was, that Alice Vane's secret for restoring the hues of the picture had merely effected a temporary renovation. But those who, in that brief interval, had beheld the awful visage of Edward Randolph, desired no second glance, and ever afterwards trembled at the recollection of the scene, as if an evil spirit had appeared visibly among them. And as for Hutchinson, when, far over the ocean, his dying hour drew on, he gasped for breath, and complained that he was choking with the blood of the Boston massacre; and Francis Lincoln, the former Captain of Castle William, who was standing at his bed side, perceived a likeness in his frenzied look to that of Edward Randolph. Did his broken spirit feel, at that dread hour, the tremendous burthen of a people's curse?

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

THE AMBITIOUS GUEST

ONE September night, a family had gathered round their hearth, and piled it high with the drift-wood of mountain streams, the dry cones of the pine, and the splintered ruins of great trees that had come crashing down the precipice. Up the chimney roared the fire, and brightened the room with its broad blaze. The faces of the father and mother had a sober gladness ; the children laughed ; the eldest daughter was the image of Happiness at seventeen ; and the aged grandmother, who sat knitting in the warmest place, was the image of Happiness grown old. They had found the "herb, heart's ease," in the bleakest spot of all New England. This family were situated in the Notch of the White Hills, where the wind was sharp throughout the year, and pitilessly cold in the winter—giving their cottage all its fresh inclemency before it descended on the valley of the Saco. They dwelt in a cold spot and a dangerous one ; for a mountain towered above their heads, so steep that the stones would often rumble down its sides, and startle them at midnight.

The daughter had just uttered some simple jest, that filled them all with mirth, when the wind came through the Notch and seemed to pause before their cottage—rattling the door, with a sound of wailing and lamentation, before it passed into the valley. For a moment it saddened them, though there was nothing unusual in the tones. But the family were glad again when they perceived that the latch was lifted by some traveller, whose footsteps had been unheard amid the dreary blast, which heralded his approach, and wailed as he was entering, and went moaning away from the door.

Though they dwelt in such a solitude, these people held daily converse with the world. The romantic pass of the Notch is a great artery, through which the life-blood of internal commerce is continually throbbing, between Maine, on one side, and the Green Mountains and the shores of the St. Lawrence on the other. The stage-coach always drew up before the door of the cottage. The wayfarer, with no companion but his staff, paused here to exchange a word, that the sense of loneliness might not utterly overcome him

ere he could pass through the cleft of the mountain, or reach the first house in the valley. And here the teamster, on his way to Portland-market, would put up for the night ; and, if a bachelor, might sit an hour beyond the usual bedtime, and steal a kiss from the mountain maid at parting. It was one of those primitive taverns where the traveller pays only for food and lodging, but meets with a homely kindness beyond all price. When the footsteps were heard, therefore, between the outer door and the inner one, the whole family rose up, grandmother, children, and all, as if about to welcome some one who belonged to them, and whose fate was linked with theirs.

The door was opened by a young man. His face at first wore the melancholy expression, almost despondency, of one who travels a wild and bleak road, at nightfall and alone, but soon brightened up when he saw the kindly warmth of his reception. He felt his heart spring forward to meet them all, from the old woman, who wiped a chair with her apron, to the little child that held out its arms to him. One glance and smile placed the stranger on a footing of innocent familiarity with the eldest daughter.

"Ah, this fire is the right thing," cried he ; "especially when there is such a pleasant circle round it. I am quite benumbed ; for the Notch is just like the pipe of a great pair of bellows ; it has blown a terrible blast in my face, all the way from Bartlett."

"Then you are going towards Vermont ?" said the master of the house, as he helped to take a light knapsack off the young man's shoulders.

"Yes ; to Burlington, and far enough beyond," replied he. "I meant to have been at Ethan Crawford's to-night ; but a pedestrian lingers along such a road as this. It is no matter ; for, when I saw this good fire, and all your cheerful faces, I felt as if you had kindled it on purpose for me, and were waiting my arrival. So I shall sit down among you, and make myself at home."

The frank-hearted stranger had just drawn his chair to the fire, when something like a heavy footstep was heard without, rushing down the steep side of the mountain, as with long and rapid strides, and taking such a leap, in passing the cottage, as to strike the opposite precipice. The family held their breath, because they knew the sound, and their guest held his by instinct.

"The old mountain has thrown a stone at us, for fear we should forget him," said the landlord, recovering himself. "He sometimes nods his head, and threatens to come down ; but we are old neighbours and agree together pretty well, upon the whole. Besides, we have a sure place of refuge, hard by, if he should be coming in good earnest."

Let us now suppose the stranger to have finished his supper of

bear's meat ; and by his natural felicity of manner, to have placed himself on a footing of kindness with the whole family, so that they talked as freely together as if he belonged to their mountain brood. He was of a proud, yet gentle spirit—haughty and reserved among the rich and great ; but ever ready to stoop his head to the lowly cottage door, and be like a brother or a son at the poor man's fireside. In the household of the Notch, he found warmth and simplicity of feeling, the pervading intelligence of New England, and a poetry of native growth, which they had gathered, when they little thought of it, from the mountain peaks and chasms, and at the very threshold of their romantic and dangerous abode. He had travelled far and alone ; his whole life, indeed, had been a solitary path ; for, with the lofty caution of his nature, he had kept himself apart from those who might otherwise have been his companions. The family too, though so kind and hospitable, had that consciousness of unity among themselves, and separation from the world at large, which, in every domestic circle, should still keep a holy place, where no stranger may intrude. But, this evening, a prophetic sympathy impelled the refined and educated youth to pour out his heart before the simple mountaineers, and constrained them to answer him with the same free confidence. And thus it should have been. Is not the kindred of a common fate a closer tie than that of birth ?

The secret of the young man's character was a high and abstracted ambition. He could have borne to live an undistinguished life, but not to be forgotten in the grave. Yearning desire had been transformed to hope ; and hope, long cherished, had become like certainty, that obscurely as he journeyed now, a glory was to beam on all his pathway—though not, perhaps, while he was treading it. But, when posterity should gaze back into the gloom of what was now the present, they would trace the brightness of his footsteps, brightening as meaner glories faded, and confess that a gifted one had passed from his cradle to his tomb, with none to recognise him.

"As yet," cried the stranger—his cheek glowing and his eye flashing with enthusiasm—"as yet, I have done nothing. Were I to vanish from the earth to-morrow, none would know so much of me as you : that a nameless youth came up, at nightfall, from the valley of the Saco, and opened his heart to you in the evening, and passed through the Notch, by sunrise, and was seen no more. Not a soul would ask—'Who was he ? Whither did the wanderer go ?' But I cannot die till I have achieved my destiny. Then, let Death come ! I shall have built my monument !"

There was a continual flow of natural emotion, gushing forth amid abstracted reverie, which enabled the family to understand this young man's sentiments, though so foreign from their own. With

quick sensibility of the ludicrous, he blushed at the ardour into which he had been betrayed

"You laugh at me," said he, taking the eldest daughter's hand, and laughing himself. "You think my ambition as nonsensical as if I were to freeze myself to death on the top of Mount Washington, only that people might spy at me from the country round about. And, truly, that would be a noble pedestal for a man's statue!"

"It is better to sit here by this fire," answered the girl, blushing, "and be comfortable and contented, though nobody thinks about us."

"I suppose," said her father, after a fit of musing, "there is something natural in what the young man says; and if my mind had been turned that way, I might have felt just the same. It is strange, wife, how his talk has set my head running on things that are pretty certain never to come to pass."

"Perhaps they may," observed the wife. "Is the man thinking what he will do when he is a widower?"

"No, no!" cried he, repelling the idea with reproachful kindness. "When I think of your death, Esther, I think of mine, too. But I was wishing we had a good farm, in Bartlett, or Bethlehem, or Littleton, or some other township round the White Mountains; but not where they could tumble on our heads. I should want to stand well with my neighbours, and be called 'Squire, and sent to General Court for a term or two; for a plain, honest man may do as much good there as a lawyer. And when I should be grown quite an old man, and you an old woman, so as not to be long apart, I might die happy enough in my bed, and leave you all crying around me. A slate gravestone would suit me as well as a marble one—with just my name and age, and a verse of a hymn, and something to let people know that I lived an honest man, and died a Christian."

"There, now!" exclaimed the stranger; "it is our nature to desire a monument, be it slate, or marble, or a pillar of granite, or a glorious memory in the universal heart of man."

"We're in a strange way, to-night," said the wife, with tears in her eyes. "They say it's a sign of something, when folks minds go a-wandering so. Hark to the children."

They listened accordingly. The younger children had been put to bed in another room, but with an open door between, so that they could be heard talking busily among themselves. One and all seemed to have caught the infection from the fireside circle, and were outvying each other in wild wishes, and childish projects of what they would do when they came to be men and women. At length, a little boy, instead of addressing his brothers and sisters, called out to his mother.

"I'll tell you what I wish, mother," cried he. "I want you and

father and grandma'am, and all of us, and the stranger, too, to start right away, and go and take a drink out of the basin of the Flume ! ”

Nobody could help laughing at the child's notion of leaving a warm bed, and dragging them from a cheerful fire, to visit the basin of the Flume—a brook which tumbles over the precipice deep within the Notch. The boy had hardly spoken, when a waggon rattled along the road, and stopped a moment before the door. It appeared to contain two or three men, who were cheering their hearts with the rough chorus of a song, which resounded, in broken notes, between the cliffs, while the singers hesitated whether to continue their journey, or put up here for the night.

“ Father,” said the girl, “ they are calling you by name.”

But the good man doubted whether they had really called him, and was unwilling to show himself too solicitous of gain, by inviting people to patronise his house. He, therefore, did not hurry to the door ; and the lash being soon applied, the travellers plunged into the Notch, still singing and laughing, though their music and mirth came back drearily from the heart of the mountain.

“ There, mother ! ” cried the boy, again. “ They'd have given us a ride to the Flume.”

Again they laughed at the child's pertinacious fancy for a night ramble. But it happened that a light cloud passed over the daughter's spirit ; she looked gravely into the fire, and drew a breath that was almost a sigh. It forced its way, in spite of a little struggle to repress it. Then starting and blushing, she looked quickly round the circle, as if they had caught a glimpse into her bosom. The stranger asked what she had been thinking of.

“ Nothing,” answered she, with a downcast smile. “ Only I felt lonesome just then.”

“ Oh, I have always had a gift of feeling what is in other people's hearts,” said he, half seriously. “ Shall I tell the secret of yours ? For I know what to think, when a young girl shivers by a warm hearth, and complains of lonesomeness at her mother's side. Shall I put these feelings into words ? ”

“ They would not be a girl's feelings any longer, if they could be put into words,” replied the mountain nymph, laughing, but avoiding his eye.

All this was said apart. Perhaps a germ of love was springing in their hearts, so pure that it might blossom in Paradise, since it could not be matured on earth ; for women worship such gentle dignity as his ; and the proud, contemplative, yet kindly soul is oftenest captivated by simplicity like hers. But while they spoke softly, and he was watching the happy sadness, the lightsome shadows, the shy yearnings of a maiden's nature, the wind through the Notch took a deeper and drearier sound. It seemed, as the fanciful

stranger said, like the choral strain of the spirits of the blast, who, in old Indian times, had their dwelling among these mountains, and made their heights and recesses a sacred region. There was a wail along the road, as if a funeral were passing. To chase away the gloom, the family threw pine branches on their fire, till the dry leaves crackled and the flame arose, discovering once again a scene of peace and humble happiness. The light hovered about them fondly, and caressed them all. There were the little faces of the children, peeping from their bed apart, and here the father's frame of strength, the mother's subdued and careful mien, the high-browed youth, the budding girl, and the good old grandam, still knitting in the warmest place. The aged woman looked up from her task, and, with fingers ever busy, was the next to speak.

"Old folks have their notions," said she, "as well as young ones. You've been wishing and planning; and letting your heads run on one thing and another, till you've set my mind a-wandering too. Now what should an old woman wish for, when she can go but a step or two before she comes to her grave? Children, it will haunt me night and day till I tell you."

"What is it, mother?" cried the husband and wife, at once.

Then the old woman, with an air of mystery, which drew the circle closer round the fire, informed them that she had provided her grave-clothes some years before—a nice linen shroud, a cap with a muslin ruff, and everything of a finer sort than she had worn since her wedding-day. But, this evening, an old superstition had strangely recurred to her. It used to be said, in her younger days, that, if anything were amiss with a corpse, if only the ruff were not smooth, or the cap did not set right, the corpse, in the coffin and beneath the clods, would strive to put up its cold hands and arrange it. The bare thought made her nervous.

"Don't talk so, grandmother!" said the girl, shuddering.

"Now,"—continued the old woman, with singular earnestness, yet smiling strangely at her own folly,—“I want one of you, my children—when your mother is drest, and in the coffin—I want one of you to hold a looking-glass over my face. Who knows but I may take a glimpse at myself, and see whether all's right?”

"Old and young, we dream of graves and monuments," murmured the stranger youth. "I wonder how mariners feel when the ship is sinking, and they, unknown and undistinguished, are to be buried together in the ocean—that wide and nameless sepulchre!"

For a moment, the old woman's ghastly conceptions so engrossed the minds of her hearers, that a sound, abroad in the night, rising like the roar of a blast, had grown broad, deep, and terrible, before the fated group were conscious of it. The house, and all within it, trembled; the foundations of the earth seemed to be shaken, as if

this awful sound were the peal of the last trump. Young and old exchanged one wild glance, and remained an instant, pale, affrighted, without utterance, or power to move. Then the same shriek burst simultaneously from all their lips.

"The Slide! The Slide!"

The simplest words must intimate, but not portray, the unutterable horror of the catastrophe. The victims rushed from their cottage, and sought refuge in what they deemed a safer spot—where, in contemplation of such an emergency, a sort of barrier had been reared. Alas! they had quitted their security, and fled right into the pathway of destruction. Down came the whole side of the mountain, in a cataract of ruin. Just before it reached the house, the stream broke into two branches—shivered not a window there, but overwhelmed the whole vicinity, blocked up the road, and annihilated everything in its dreadful course. Long ere the thunder of that great Slide had ceased to roar among the mountains, the mortal agony had been endured, and the victims were at peace. Their bodies were never found.

The next morning, the light smoke was seen stealing from the cottage chimney, up the mountain-side. Within, the fire was yet smouldering on the hearth, and the chairs in a circle round it, as if the inhabitants had but gone forth to view the devastation of the Slide, and would shortly return to thank Heaven for their miraculous escape. All had left separate tokens, by which those, who had known the family, were made to shed a tear for each. Who has not heard their name? The story has been told far and wide, and will for ever be a legend of these mountains. Poets have sung their fate.

There were circumstances which led some to suppose that a stranger had been received into the cottage on this awful night, and had shared the catastrophe of all its inmates. Others denied that there were sufficient grounds for such a conjecture. Woe, for the high-souled youth, with his dream of Earthly Immortality! His name and person utterly unknown; his history, his way of life, his plans, a mystery never to be solved; his death and his existence equally a doubt! Whose was the agony of that death-moment?

N. P. WILLIS

1806-1867

TWO BUCKETS IN A WELL

"Five hundred dollars a year!" echoed Fanny Bellairs, as the first silver grey of the twilight spread over her picture.

"And my art," modestly added the painter, prying into his bright copy of the lips pronouncing upon his destiny.

"And how much may that be, at the present rate of patronage—one picture a year, painted for love!"

"Fanny, how can you be so calculating!"

"By the bumps over my eyebrows, I suppose. Why, my dear coz, we have another state of existence to look forward to—old man-age and old woman-age! What am I to do with five hundred dollars a year, when my old frame wants gilding—(to use one of your own similes)—I sha'n't always be pretty Fanny Bellairs!"

"But, good Heavens! we shall grow old together!" exclaimed the painter, sitting down at her feet, "and what will you care for other admiration, if your husband see you still beautiful, with the eyes of memory and habit."

"Even if I were sure he would so look upon me," answered Miss Bellairs, more seriously, "I cannot but dread an old age without great means of embellishment. Old people, except in poetry and in very primitive society, are dishonoured by wants and cares. And, indeed, before we are old—when neither young nor old—we want horses and ottomans, kalydor and conservatories, books, pictures, and silk curtains—all quite out of the range of your little allowance, don't you see!"

"You do not love me, Fanny!"

"I do—and will marry you, Philip—as I, long ago, with my whole heart, promised. But I wish to be happy with you—as happy, quite as happy, as is at all possible, with our best efforts, and coolest, discreetest management. I laugh the matter over sometimes, but I may tell you, since you are determined to be in earnest, that I have treated it, in my solitary thought, as the one important event of my life—(so indeed it is!)—and, as such, worthy of all forethought, patience, self-denial, and calculation. To inevitable ills I can make

up my mind like other people. If your art were your only hope of subsistence—why—I don't know—(should I look well as a page?)—I don't know that I couldn't run your errands and grind your paints in hose and doublet. But there is another door open for you—a counting-house door, to be sure—leading to opulence and all the appliances of dignity and happiness, and through this door, my dear Philip, the art you would live by comes to pay tribute and beg for patronage. Now, out of your hundred and twenty reasons, give me the two stoutest and best, why you should refuse your brother's golden offer of partnership—my share, in your alternative of poverty, left for the moment out of the question."

Rather overborne by the confident decision of his beautiful cousin, and having probably made up his mind that he must ultimately yield to her, Philip replied in a lower and more dejected tone:

"If you were not to be a sharer in my renown, should I be so fortunate as to acquire it, I should feel as if it were selfish to dwell so much on my passion for distinction, and my devotion to my pencil as a means of winning it. My heart is full of you—but it is full of ambition, too, paradox though it be. I cannot live ignoble. I should not have felt worthy to press my love upon you—worthy to possess you—except with the prospect of celebrity in my art. You make the world dark to me, Fanny! You close down the sky, when you shut out this hope! Yet it shall be so."

Philip paused a moment, and the silence was uninterrupted.

"There was another feeling I had, upon which I have not insisted," he continued. "By my brother's project, I am to reside almost wholly abroad. Even the little stipend I have to offer you now is absorbed of course by the investment of my property in his trading capital, and marriage, till I have partly enriched myself, would be even more hopeless than at present. Say the interval were five years—and five years of separation!"

"With happiness in prospect, it would soon pass, my dear Philip!"

"But is there nothing wasted in this time? My life is yours—the gift of love. Are not these coming five years the very flower of it!—a mutual loss, too, for are they not, even more emphatically, the very flower of yours? Eighteen and twenty-five are ages at which to marry, not ages to defer. During this time the entire flow of my existence is at its crowning fulness—passion, thought, joy, tenderness, susceptibility to beauty and sweetness—all I have that can be diminished or tarnished, or made dull by advancing age and contact with the world, is thrown away—for its spring and summer. Will the autumn of life repay us for this? Will it—even if we are rich and blest with health, and as capable of an unblemished union as now? Think of this a moment, dear Fanny!"

"I do—it is full of force and meaning, and, could we marry now, with a tolerable prospect of competency, it would be irresistible. But poverty in wedlock, Philip——"

"What do you call poverty? If we can suffice for each other, and have the necessities of life, we are not poor! My art will bring us consideration enough—which is the main end of wealth, after all—and, of society, speaking for myself only, I want nothing. Luxuries for yourself, Fanny—means for your dear comfort and pleasure—you should not want if the world held them, and surely the unbounded devotion of one man to the support of the one woman he loves, *ought* to suffice for the task! I am strong—I am capable of labour—I have limbs to toil, if my genius and my present means fail me, and oh, Heaven! you could not want!"

"No, no, no! I thought not of want!" murmured Miss Bellairs; "I thought only——"

But she was not permitted to finish the sentence.

"Then my bright picture for the future *may* be realised!" exclaimed Philip, knitting his hands together in a transport of hope. "I may build up a reputation, with *you* for the constant partner of its triumphs and excitements! I may go through the world, and have some care in life besides subsistence, how I shall sleep, and eat, and accumulate gold; some companion, who, from the threshold of manhood, shared every thought—and knew every feeling—some pure and present angel who walked with me and purified my motives and ennobled my ambitions, and received from my lips and eyes, and from the beating of my heart against her own, all the love I had to give in a lifetime. Tell me, Fanny! tell me, my sweet cousin! is not this a picture of bliss, which, combined with success in my noble art, might make a Paradise on earth for you and me?"

The hand of Fanny Bellairs rested on the upturned forehead of her lover as he sat at her feet in the deepening twilight, and she answered him with such sweet words as are linked together by spells known only to woman—but his palette and pencils were, nevertheless, burned in solemn holocaust that very night, and the lady carried her point, as ladies must. And, to the importation of silks from Lyons, was devoted, thenceforth, the genius of a Raphael—perhaps! Who knows?

The reader will naturally have gathered from this dialogue that Miss Fanny Bellairs had black eyes, and was rather below the middle stature. She was a belle, and it is only belle-metal of this particular description which is not fusible by "burning words." She had mind enough to appreciate fully the romance and enthusiasm of her cousin, Philip Ballister, and knew precisely the phenomena which a

tall *blonde* (this complexion of woman being soluble in love and tears) would have exhibited under a similar experiment. While the fire of her love glowed, therefore, she opposed little resistance, and seemed softened and yielding, but her purpose remained unaltered, and she rang out "No!" the next morning, with a tone as little changed as a convent-bell from matins to vespers, though it has passed meantime through the furnace of an Italian noon.

Fanny was not a designing girl, either. She might have found a wealthier customer for her heart than her cousin Philip. And she loved this cousin as truly and well as her nature would admit, or as need be, indeed. But two things had conspired to give her the unmanageable quality just described—a natural disposition to confide, first and foremost, on all occasions, in her own sagacity, and a vivid impression made upon her mind by a childhood of poverty. At the age of twelve she had been transferred from the distressed fireside of her mother, Mrs. Bellairs, to the luxurious roof of her aunt, Mrs. Ballister, and, her mother dying soon after, the orphan girl was adopted, and treated as a child; but the memory of the troubled hearth at which she had first learned to observe and reason, coloured all the purposes and affections, thoughts, impulses, and wishes of the ripening girl, and to think of happiness in any proximity to privation seemed to her impossible, even though it were in the bosom of love. Seeing no reason to give her cousin credit for any knowledge of the world beyond his own experience, she decided to think for him as well as love him, and, not being so much pressed as the enthusiastic painter by the "*besoin d'aimer et de se faire aimer*," she very composedly prefixed, to the possession of her hand, the trifling achievement of getting rich—quite sure that if he knew as much as she, he would willingly run that race without the encumbrance of matrimony.

The death of Mr. Ballister, senior, had left the widow and her two boys more slenderly provided for than was anticipated—Phil's portion, after leaving college, producing the moderate income before mentioned. The elder brother had embarked in his father's business, and it was thought best on all hands, for the younger Ballister to follow his example. But Philip, whose college leisure had been devoted to poetry and painting, and whose genius for the latter, certainly, was very decided, brought down his habits by a resolute economy to the limits of his income, and took up the pencil for a profession. With passionate enthusiasm, great purity of character, distaste for all society not in harmony with his favourite pursuit, and an industry very much concentrated and rendered effective by abstemious habits, Philip Ballister was very likely to develop what genius might lie between his head and hand, and his progress in the first year had been allowed, by eminent artists, to

give very unusual promise. The Ballisters were still together, under the maternal roof, and the painter's studies were the portraits of the family, and Fanny's picture, of course, much the most difficult to finish. It would be very hard if a painter's portrait of his liege mistress, the lady of his heart, were not a good picture, and Fanny Bellairs on canvas was divine accordingly. If the copy had more softness of expression than the original (as it was thought to have), it only proves what wise men have for some time suspected, that love is more dumb than blind, and the faults of our faultless idols are noted, however unconsciously. Neither thumb-screws nor hot coals—nothing probably but repentance after matrimony—would have drawn from Philip Ballister, in words, the same correction of his mistress's foible that had oozed out through his treacherous pencil!

Cupid is often drawn as a stranger pleading to be "taken in," but it is a miracle that he is not invariably drawn as a portrait-painter. A bird tied to the muzzle of a gun—an enemy who has written a book—an Indian prince under the protection of Giovanni Bulletto (Tuscan for John Bull),—is not more close upon demolition, one would think, than the heart of a lady delivered over to a painter's eyes, posed, draped, and lighted with the one object of studying her beauty. If there be any magnetism in isolated attention, any in steadfast gazing, any in passes of the hand hither and thither—if there be any magic in *ce doux demijour* so loved in France, in stuff for flattery ready pointed and feathered, in freedom of admiration, "and all in the way of business"—then is a lovable sitter to a love-like painter in "parlous" vicinity (as the new school would phrase it) to sweet heart-land! Pleasure in a vocation has no offset in political economy as honour has ("the more honour the less profit"), or portrait-painters would be poorer than poets.

And, *malgré* his consciousness of the quality which required softening in his cousin's beauty, and *malgré* his rare advantages for obtaining over her a lover's proper ascendancy, Mr. Philip Ballister bowed to the stronger will of Miss Fanny Bellairs, and sailed for France on his apprenticeship to Mammon.

The reader will please to advance five years. Before proceeding thence with our story, however, let us take a Parthian glance at the overstepped interval. Philip Ballister had left New York with the triple vow that he would enslave every faculty of his mind and body to business, that he would not return till he had made a fortune, and that such interstices as might occur in the building up of this château for felicity should be filled with sweet reveries about Fanny

Bellairs. The forsworn painter had genius, as we have before hinted, and genius is (as much as it is any one thing), the power of concentration. He entered upon his duties, accordingly, with a force and patience of application which soon made him master of what are called business habits, and, once in possession of the details, his natural cleverness gave him a speedy insight to all the scope and tactics of his particular field of trade. Under his guidance, the affairs of the house were soon in a much more prosperous train, and, after a year's residence at Lyons, Philip saw his way very clear to manage them with a long arm and take up his quarters in Paris. "*Les faits sont les seuls hommes qui aient soin d'eux mêmes*," says a French novelist, but there is a period, early or late, in the lives of the cleverest men, when they become suddenly curious as to their capacity for the graces. Paris, to a stranger who does not visit in the Faubourg St. Germain, is a republic of personal exterior, where the degree of privilege depends, with Utopian impartiality, on the style of the outer man; and Paris, therefore, if he is not already a Bachelor of Arts (qu ?—*beau's Arts*), usually serves the traveller as an Alma Mater of the pomps and vanities.

Phil Ballister, up to the time of his matriculation in *Chaussée d'Antin*, was a romantic-looking sloven. From this to a very dashing coxcomb is but half a step, and, to be rid of the coxcombry and retain a look of fashion, is still within the easy limits of imitation. But—to obtain superiority of presence, with no apparent aid from dress and no describable manner, and to display, at the same time every natural advantage in effective relief, and, withal, to adapt this subtle philtre, not only to the approbation of the critical and censorious, but to the taste of fair women gifted with judgment as God pleases—this is a finish not born with any man (though unsuccessful if it do not seem to be), and never reached in the apprenticeship of life, and never reached at all by men not much above their fellows. He who has it, has "bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany, and his behaviour everywhere," for he must know, as a chart of quicksands, the pronounced models of other nations; but to be a "picked man of countries," and to *have been* a coxcomb and a man of fashion, are, as a painter would say, but the setting of the palette toward the making of the *chef-d'œuvre*.

Business prospered, and the facilities of leisure increased, while Ballister passed through these transitions of taste, and he found intervals to travel, and time to read, and opportunity to indulge, as far as he could with the eye only, his passion for knowledge in the arts. To all that appertained to the refinement of himself, he applied the fine feelers of a delicate and passionate construction, physical and mental, and, as the reader will already have concluded,

wasted on culture comparatively unprofitable, faculties that would have been better employed but for the meddling of Miss Fanny Bellairs.

Ballister's return from France was heralded by the arrival of statuary and pictures, books, furniture, and numberless articles of tasteful and costly luxury. The reception of these by the family at home threw rather a new light on the probable changes in the long-absent brother, for, from the signal success of the business he had managed, they had very naturally supposed that it was the result only of unremitted and plodding care. Vague rumours of changes in his personal appearance had reached them, such as might be expected from conformity to foreign fashions, but those who had seen Philip Ballister in France, and called subsequently on the family in New York, were not the people qualified to judge of the man, either from their own powers of observation or from any confidence he was likely to put forward while in their society. His letters had been delightful, but they were confined to third-person topics, descriptions of things likely to interest them, etc., and Fanny had few addressed personally to herself, having thought it worth while, for the experiment sake, or for some other reason, to see whether love would subsist without its usual *pabulum* of tender correspondence, and a *veto* on love-letters having served her for a parting injunction at Phil's embarkation for Havre. However varied by their different fancies, the transformation looked for by the whole family was substantially the same—the romantic artist sobered down to a practical, plain man of business. And Fanny herself had an occasional misgiving as to her relish for his counting-house virtues and manners; though, on the detection of the feeling, she immediately closed her eyes upon it, and drummed up her delinquent constancy for "parade and inspection."

All bustles are very much alike (we use the word as defined in Johnson), and the reader will appreciate our delicacy, besides, in not intruding on the first reunion of relatives and lovers long separated.

The morning after Philip Ballister's arrival, the family sat long at breakfast. The mother's gaze fastened untiringly on the features of her son—still her boy—prying into them with a vain effort to reconcile the face of the man with the cherished picture of the child with sunny locks, and noting little else than the work of inward change upon the countenance and expression. The brother, with the predominant feeling of respect for the intelligence and industry of one who had made the fortunes of the house, read only subdued

sagacity in the perfect simplicity of his whole exterior. And Fanny—Fanny was puzzled. The *bourgeoisie* and ledger-bred hardness of manner which she had looked for were not there, nor any variety of the “foreign slip-slop” common to travelled youth, nor any superciliousness, nor (faith!) any wear and tear of youth and good looks—nothing that she expected—nothing! Not even a French guard-chain!

What there *was* in her cousin's manners and exterior, however, was much more difficult to define by Miss Bellairs than what there *was not*. She began the renewal of their intercourse with very high spirits, herself—the simple nature and unpretendingness of his address awaking only an unembarrassed pleasure at seeing him again—but she soon began to suspect there was an exquisite refinement in this very simplicity, and to wonder “at the trick of it”; and, after the first day passed in his society, her heart beat when he spoke to her, as it did not use to beat when she was sitting to him for her picture, and listening to his passionate love-making. And, with all her faculties, she studied him. What was the charm of his presence? He was himself, and himself only. He seemed perfect, but he seemed to have arrived at perfection like a statue, not like a picture—by what had been taken away, not by what had been laid on. He was as natural as a bird, and as graceful and unembarrassed. He neither forced conversation, nor pressed the little attentions of the drawing-room, and his attitudes were full of repose; yet she was completely absorbed in what he said, and she had been impressed imperceptibly with his high-bred politeness and the singular elegance of his person. Fanny felt there was a change in her relative position to her cousin. In what it consisted, or which had the advantage, she was perplexed to discover—but she bit her lips as she caught herself thinking that if she were not engaged to marry Philip Ballister, she should suspect that she had just fallen irrecoverably in love with him.

It would have been a novelty in the history of Miss Bellairs that any event to which she had once consented, should admit of reconsideration; and the Ballister family, used to her strong will, were confirmed fatalists as to the coming about of her ends and aims. Her marriage with Philip, therefore, was discussed, *cœur ouvert*, from his first arrival, and, indeed, in her usual fashion of saving others the trouble of making up their minds, “herself had named the day.” This, it is true, was before his landing, and was, then, an effort of considerable magnanimity, as the expectant Penelope was not yet advised of her lover's state of preservation or damages by cares and keeping. If Philip had not found his wedding-day fixed on his arrival, however, he probably would have had a voice in the naming of it, for, with Fanny's new inspirations as to his

character, there had grown up a new flower in her garden of beauties—timidity! What bird of the air had sown the seed in such a soil was a problem to herself—but true it was!—the confident belle had grown a blushing trembler! She would as soon have thought of bespeaking her wings for the sky, as to have ventured on naming the day in a short week after.

The day *was* named, however, and the preparations went on—*nem. con.*—the person most interested (after herself) accepting every congratulation and allusion, touching the event, with the most impenetrable suavity. The marbles and pictures, upholstery and services, were delivered over to the order of Miss Bellairs; and Philip, disposed, apparently, to be very much a recluse in his rooms, or, at other times, engrossed by troops of welcoming friends, saw much less of his bride-elect than suited her wishes, and saw her seldom alone. By particular request, also, he took no part in the plenishing and embellishing of the new abode—not permitted even to inquire where it was situated; and, under this cover, besides the pleasure of having her own way, Fanny concealed a little secret, which, when disclosed, she now felt, would figure forth Philip's comprehension, her whole scheme of future happiness. She had taken the elder brother into her counsels a fortnight after Philip's return, and, with his aid and consent, had abandoned the original idea of a house in town, purchased a beautifully-secluded estate and *cottage ornée*, on the East River, and transferred thither all the objects of art, furniture, etc. One room only of the maternal mansion was permitted to contribute its quota to the completion of the bridal dwelling—the wing, never since inhabited, in which Philip had made his essay as a painter—and, without variation of a cobweb, and, with whimsical care and effort on the part of Miss Fanny, this apartment was reproduced at Revedere—her own picture on the easel, as it stood on the night of his abandonment of his art, and palette, pencils and colours in tempting readiness on the table. Even the fire-grate of the old studio had been re-set in the new, and the cottage throughout had been refitted with a view to occupation in the winter. And to sundry hints on the part of the elder brother, that some thought should be given to a city residence—for the Christmas holidays at least—Fanny replied, through a blush, that she would never wish to see the town—with Philip at Revedere!

Five years had ripened and mellowed the beauty of Fanny Bellairs, and the same summer-time of youth had turned into fruit the feeling left by Philip in bud and flower. She was ready now for love. She had felt the variable temper of society, and there was a presentiment in the heart, of receding flatteries and the winter of life. It was with mournful self-reproach that she thought of the

years wasted in separation, of her own choosing, from the man she loved ; and, with the power to recall time, she would have thanked God with tears of joy for the privilege of retracing the chain of life to that link of parting. Not worth a day of those lost years, she bitterly confessed to herself, was the wealth they had purchased.

It lacked as little as one week of "the happy day," when the workmen were withdrawn from Revedere, and the preparations for a family breakfast, to be succeeded by the agreeable surprise to Philip of informing him he was at home, were finally completed. One or two very intimate friends were added to the party, and the invitations (from the elder Ballister) proposed simply a *déjeuner sur l'herbe* in the grounds of an unoccupied villa, the property of an acquaintance.

With the subsiding of the excitement of return, the early associations which had temporarily confused and coloured the feelings of Philip Ballister settled gradually away, leaving uppermost once more the fastidious refinement of the Parisian. Through this medium, thin and cold, the bubbles from the breathing of the heart of youth, rose rarely and reluctantly. The Ballisters held a good station in society, without caring for much beyond the easy conveniences of life, and Fanny, though capable of any degree of elegance, had not seen the expediency of raising the tone of her manners above that of her immediate friends. Without being positively distasteful to Philip, the family circle, Fanny included, left him much to desire in the way of society, and, unwilling to abate the warmth of his attentions while with them, he had latterly pleaded occupation more frequently, and passed his time in the more congenial company of his library of art. This was the less noticed that it gave Miss Bellairs the opportunity to make frequent visits to the workmen at Revedere, and, in the polished devotion of her betrothed when with her, Fanny saw nothing reflected but her own daily increasing tenderness and admiration.

The morning of the *fête* came in like the air in an overture—a harmony of all the instruments of summer. The party were at the gate of Revedere by ten, and the drive through the avenue to the lawn drew a burst of delighted admiration from all. The place was exquisite, and seen in its glory, and Fanny's heart was brimming with gratified pride and exultation. She assumed at once the dispensation of the honours, and beautiful she looked with her snowy dress and raven ringlets flitting across the lawn, and queening it like Perdita among the flowers. Having narrowly escaped bursting into tears of joy when Philip pronounced the place prettier than anything he had seen in his travels, she was, for the rest of the day, calmly happy ; and, with the grateful shade, the delicious breakfast

in the grove, the rambling and boating on the river, the hours passed off like dreams, and no one even hinted a regret that the house itself was under lock and bar. And so the sun set, and the twilight came on, and the guests were permitted to order round their carriages and depart, the Ballisters accompanying them to the gate. And, on the return of the family through the avenue, excuses were made for idling hither and thither, till light began to show through the trees, and, by the time of their arrival at the lawn, the low windows of the cottage poured forth streams of light, and the open doors, and servants busy within, completed a scene more like magic than reality. Philip was led in by the excited girl who was the fairy of the spell, and his astonishment at the discovery of his statuary and pictures, books and furniture, arranged in complete order within, was fed upon with the passionate delight of love in authority.

When an hour had been spent in examining and admiring the different apartments, an inner room was thrown open, in which supper was prepared, and this fourth act in the day's drama was lingered over in untiring happiness by the family.

Mrs. Ballister, the mother, rose and retired, and Philip pleaded indisposition, and begged to be shown to the room allotted to him. This was ring-ing-up the curtain for the last act sooner than had been planned by Fanny, but she announced herself as his chamberlain, and, with her hands affectionately crossed on his arm, led him to a suite of rooms in a wing still unvisited, and with a good-night kiss, left him at the open door of the revived studio, furnished for the night with a bachelor's bed. Turning upon the threshold, he closed the door with a parting wish of sweet dreams, and Fanny, after listening a moment with a vain hope of overhearing some expression of pleasure, and lingering again on her way back, to be overtaken by her surprised lover, sought her own bed without rejoining the circle, and passed a sleepless and happy night of tears and joy.

Breakfast was served the next morning on a terrace overlooking the river, and it was voted by acclamation that Fanny never before looked so lovely. As none but the family were to be present, she had stolen a march on her marriage wardrobe, and added to her demi-toilet a morning cap of exquisite becomingness. Altogether she looked deliciously wife-like, and did the honours of the breakfast-table with a grace and sweetness that warmed out love and compliments even from the sober soil of household intimacy. Philip had not yet made his appearance, and they lingered long at table, till at last, a suggestion that he might be ill started Fanny to her feet, and she ran to his door before a servant could be summoned.

The rooms were open, and the bed had not been occupied. The candle was to the socket, and on the easel, resting against the picture, was a letter addressed—"Miss Fanny Bellairs."

THE LETTER

"I have followed up to this hour, my fair cousin, in the path you have marked out for me. It has brought me back, in this chamber, to the point from which I started under your guidance, and if it had brought me back unchanged—if it restored me my energy, my hope, and my prospect of fame, I should pray Heaven that it would also give me back my love, and be content—more than content, if it gave me back also my poverty. The sight of my easel, and of the surroundings of my boyish dreams of glory, have made my heart bitter. They have given form and voice to a vague unhappiness, which has haunted me through all these absent years—years of degrading pursuits and wasted powers—and it now impels me from you, kind and lovely as you are, with an aversion I cannot control. I cannot forgive you. You have thwarted my destiny. You have extinguished with sordid cares a lamp within me, that might, by this time, have shone through the world. And what am I, since your wishes are accomplished? Enriched in pocket, and bankrupt in happiness and self-respect.

"With a heart sick, and a brain aching for distinction, I have come to an unhonoured stand-still at thirty! I am a successful tradesman, and in this character I shall probably die. Could I begin to be a painter now, say you? Alas! my knowledge of the art is too great for patience with the slow hand! I could not draw a line without despair. The pliant fingers and the plastic mind must keep pace to make progress in art. My taste is fixed, and my imagination uncreative, because chained down by certainties; and the short-sighted ardour and daring experiments which are indispensable to sustain and advance the follower in Raphael's footsteps, are too far behind for my resuming. The tide ebbed from me at the accursed burning of my pencils by your pitiless hand, and from that hour I have felt hope receding. Could I be happy with you, stranded here in ignoble idleness, and owing to you the loss of my whole venture of opportunity? No, Fanny?—surely no!

"I would not be unnecessarily harsh. I am sensible of your affection and constancy. I have deferred this explanation unwisely, till the time and place make it seem more cruel. You are at this very moment, I well know, awake in your chamber, devoting to me the vigils of a heart overflowing with tenderness. And I would—if it were possible—if it were not utterly beyond my powers of self-sacrifice and concealment—I would affect a devotion I cannot feel, and carry out this error through a life of artifice and monotony. But here, again, the work is your own, and my feelings revert bitterly to your interference. If there were no other obstacle to my

marrying you—if you were not associated repulsively with the dark cloud of my life, you are not the woman I could now enthroned in my bosom. We have diverged since the separation which I pleaded against, and which you commanded. I need for my idolatry, now, a creature to whom the sordid cares you have sacrificed me to, are utterly unknown—a woman born and educated in circumstances where want is never feared, and where calculation never enters. I must lavish my wealth, if I fulfil my desire, on one who accepts it like the air she breathes, and who knows the value of nothing but love—a bird with a human soul and form, believing herself free of all the world is rich in, and careful only for pleasure and the happiness of those who belong to her. Such women, beautiful and highly educated, are found only in ranks of society between which and my own I have been increasing in distance—nay, building an impassable barrier, in obedience to your control. Where I stop, interdicted by the stain of trade, the successful artist is free to enter. You have stamped me *plebeian*—you would not share my slow progress toward a higher sphere, and you have disqualified me for attaining it alone. In your mercenary and immovable will, and in that only, lies the secret of our twofold unhappiness.

“I leave you, to return to Europe. My brother and my friends will tell you I am mad and inexcusable, and look upon you as a victim. They will say that, to have been a painter, were nothing to the career that I might mark out for my ambition, if ambition I must have, in politics. Politics in a country where distinction is a pillory! But I could not live here. It is my misfortune that my tastes are so modified by that long and compulsory exile, that life, here, would be a perpetual penance. This unmixed air of merchandise suffocates me. Our own home is tinctured black with it. You yourself, in this rural Paradise you have conjured up, move in it like a cloud. The counting-house rings in your voice, calculation draws together your brows, you look on everything as a *means*, and know its cost; and the calm and means-forgetting *fruition*, which forms the charm and dignity of superior life, is utterly unknown to you. What would be my happiness with such a wife? What would be yours with such a husband? Yet I consider the incompatibility between us as no advantage on my part—on the contrary, a punishment, and of your inflicting. What shall I be, anywhere, but a Tantalus—a fastidious *ennuyé*, with a thirst for the inaccessibility burning in my bosom continually!

“I pray you let us avoid another meeting before my departure. Though I cannot forgive you as a lover, I can think of you with pleasure as a cousin, and I give you as your due (‘damages,’ the law would phrase it), the portion of myself which you thought most important when I offered you my all. You would not take me

without the fortune, but perhaps you will be content with the fortune without me. I shall immediately take steps to convey to you this property of Revedere, with an income sufficient to maintain it, and I trust soon to hear that you have found a husband better worthy of you than your cousin—

“PHILIP BALLISTER.”

CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN

1806-1884

THE MAN IN THE RESERVOIR

YOU may see some of the best society in New York on the top of the Distributing Reservoir, any of these fine October mornings. There were two or three carriages in waiting, and half a dozen senatorial-looking mothers with young children, pacing the parapet, as we basked there the other day in the sunshine—now watching the pickerel that glide along the lucid edges of the black pool within, and now looking off upon the scene of rich and wondrous variety that spreads along the two rivers on either side.

"They may talk of Alpheus and Arethusa," murmured an idling sophomore, who had found his way thither during recitation hours, "but the Croton in passing over an arm of the sea at Spuyten Duyvil, and bursting to sight again in this truncated pyramid, beats it all hollow. By George, too, the bay yonder looks as blue as ever the Ægean Sea to Byron's eye, gazing from the Acropolis! But the painted foliage on these crags!—the Greeks must have dreamed of such a vegetable phenomenon in the midst of their grayish olive groves, or they never would have supplied the want of it in their landscape by embroidering their marble temples with gay colours. Did you see that pike break, sir?"

"I did not."

"Zounds! his silver fin flashed upon the black Acheron, like a restless soul that hoped yet to mount from the pool."

"The place seems suggestive of fancies to you?" we observed in reply to the rattlepate.

"It is indeed, for I have done up a good deal of anxious thinking within a circle of a few yards where that fish broke just now."

"A singular place for meditation—the middle of the Reservoir!"

"You look incredulous, sir; but it's a fact. A fellow can never tell, until he is tried, in what situation his most earnest meditations may be concentrated. I am boring you, though?"

"Not at all. But you seem so familiar with the spot, I wish you could tell me why that ladder leading down to the water is lashed against the stonework in yonder corner."

"That ladder," said the young man, brightening at the question—"why, the position, perhaps the very existence, of that ladder resulted from my meditations in the Reservoir, at which you smiled just now. Shall I tell you all about them?"

"Pray do."

"Well, you have seen the notice forbidding any one to fish in the Reservoir. Now, when I read that warning, the spirit of the thing struck me at once as inferring nothing more than that one should not sully the temperance potations of our citizens by steeping bait in it, of any kind; but you probably know the common way of taking pike with a slip noose of delicate wire. I was determined to have a touch at the fellows with this kind of tackle.

"I chose a moonlight night; and an hour before the edifice was closed to visitors, I secreted myself within the walls, determined to pass the night on the top. All went as I could wish it. The night proved cloudy, but it was only a variable drift of broken clouds which obscured the moon. I had a walking cane-rod with me which would reach to the margin of the water, and several feet beyond if necessary. To this was attached the wire, about fifteen inches in length.

"I prowled along the parapet for a considerable time, but not a single fish could I see. The clouds made a flickering light and shade, that wholly foiled my steadfast gaze. I was convinced that should they come up thicker, my whole night's venture would be thrown away. 'Why should I not descend the sloping wall and get nearer on a level with the fish, for thus alone can I hope to see one?' The question had hardly shaped itself in my mind before I had one leg over the iron railing.

"If you look around you will see now that there are some half-dozen weeds growing here and there, amid the fissures of the solid masonry. In one of the fissures from whence these spring, I planted a foot and began my descent. The Reservoir was fuller than it is now, and a few strides would have carried me to the margin of the water. Holding on to the cleft above, I felt round with one foot for a place to plant it below me.

"In that moment the flap of a pound pike made me look round, and the roots of the weed upon which I partially depended gave way as I was in the act of turning. Sir, one's senses are sharpened in deadly peril; as I live now, I distinctly heard the bells of Trinity chiming midnight, as I rose to the surface the next instant, immersed in the stone caldron, where I must swim for my life Heaven only could tell how long!

"I am a capital swimmer; and this naturally gave me a degree of self-possession. Falling as I had, I of course had pitched out some distance from the sloping parapet. A few strokes brought

me to the edge. I really was not yet certain but that I could clamber up the face of the wall anywhere. I hoped that I could. I felt certain at least there was some spot where I might get hold with my hands, even if I did not ultimately ascend it.

"I tried the nearest spot. The inclination of the wall was so vertical that it did not even rest me to lean against it. I felt with my hands and with my feet. Surely, I thought, there must be some fissure like those in which that ill-omened weed had found a place for its root!

"There was none. My fingers became sore in busying themselves with the harsh and inhospitable stones. My feet slipped from the smooth and slimy masonry beneath the water; and several times my face came in rude contact with the wall, when my foothold gave way on the instant that I seemed to have found some diminutive rocky cleat upon which I could stay myself.

"Sir, did you ever see a rat drowned in a half-filled hogshead—how he swims round, and round, and round; and after vainly trying the sides again and again with his paws, fixes his eyes upon the upper rim as if he would *look himself* out of his watery prison?

"I thought of the miserable vermin, thought of him as I had often watched thus his dying agonies, when a cruel urchin of eight or ten. Boys are horribly cruel, sir; boys, women, and savages. All childlike things are cruel; cruel from a want of thought and from perverse ingenuity, although by instinct each of these is so tender. You may not have observed it, but a savage is as tender to his own young as a boy is to a favourite puppy—the same boy that will torture a kitten out of existence. I thought then, I say, of the rat drowning in a half-filled cask of water, and lifting his gaze out of the vessel as he grew more and more desperate, and I flung myself on my back, and, floating thus, fixed my eyes upon the face of the moon.

"The moon is well enough in her way, however you may look at her; but her appearance is, to say the least of it, peculiar to a man floating on his back in the centre of a stone tank, with a dead wall of some fifteen or twenty feet rising squarely on every side of him!" (The young man smiled bitterly as he said this, and shuddered once or twice before he went on musingly.) "The last time I had noted the planet with any emotion she was on the wane. Mary was with me; I had brought her out here one morning to look at the view from the top of the Reservoir. She said little of the scene, but as we talked of our old childish loves, I saw that its fresh features were incorporating themselves with tender memories of the past, and I was content.

"There was a rich golden haze upon the landscape, and as my own spirits rose amid the voluptuous atmosphere, she pointed to

the waning planet, discernible like a faint gash in the welkin, and wondered how long it would be before the leaves would fall. Strange girl! did she mean to rebuke my joyous mood, as if we had no right to be happy while Nature, withering in her pomp, and the sickly moon, wasting in the blaze of noontide, were there to remind us of 'the-gone-for-ever'? 'They will all renew themselves, dear Mary,' said I, encouragingly, 'and there is one that will ever keep tryst alike with thee and nature through all seasons, if thou wilt but be true to one of us, and remain as now a child of Nature.'

"A tear sprang to her eye, and then searching her pocket for her card-case, she remembered an engagement to be present at Miss Lawson's opening of fall bonnets at two o'clock!

"And yet, dear, wild, wayward Mary, I thought of her now. You have probably outlived this sort of thing, sir; but I, looking at the moon, as I floated there upturned to her yellow light, thought of the loved being whose tears I knew would flow when she heard of my singular fate, at once so grotesque, yet melancholy to awfulness.

"And how often we have talked, too, of that Carian shepherd who spent his damp nights upon the hills, gazing as I do on the lustrous planet! Who will revel with her amid those old superstitions? Who, from our own unlegended woods, will evoke their yet undetected, haunting spirits? Who peer with her in prying scrutiny into Nature's laws, and challenge the whispers of poetry from the voiceless throat of matter? Who laugh merrily over the stupid guesswork of pedants, that never mingled with the infinitude of Nature, through love exhaustless and all-embracing, as we have? Poor girl! she will be companionless.

"Alas! companionless for ever—save in the exciting stages of some brisk flirtation. She will live hereafter by feeding other hearts with love's lore she has learned from me, and then, Pygmalion-like, grow fond of the images she has herself endowed with semblance of divinity, until they seem to breathe back the mystery the soul can truly catch from only one.

"How anxious she will be lest the coroner shall have discovered any of her notes in my pocket!

"I felt chilly as this last reflection crossed my mind, partly at thought of the coroner, partly at the idea of Mary being unwillingly compelled to wear mourning for me, in case of such a disclosure of our engagement. It is a provoking thing for a girl of nineteen to have to go into mourning for a deceased lover at the beginning of her second winter in the metropolis.

"The water, though, with my motionless position, must have had something to do with my chilliness. I see, sir, you think that I

tell my story with great levity ; but indeed, indeed I should grow delirious did I venture to hold steadily to the awfulness of my feelings the greater part of that night. I think, indeed, I must have been most of the time hysterical with horror, for the vibrating emotions I have recapitulated did pass through my brain even as I have detailed them.

" But as I now became calm in thought, I summoned up again some resolution of action.

" I will begin at that corner (said I), and swim around the whole enclosure. I will swim slowly and again feel the sides of the tank with my feet. If die I must, let me perish at least from well-directed though exhausting effort, not sink from mere bootless weariness in sustaining myself till the morning shall bring relief.

" The sides of the place seemed to grow higher as I now kept my watery course beneath them. It was not altogether a dead pull. I had some variety of emotion in making my circuit. When I swam in the shadow, it looked to me more cheerful beyond in the moonlight. When I swam in the moonlight, I had the hope of making some discovery when I should again reach the shadow. I turned several times on my back to rest just where those wavy lines would meet. The stars looked viciously bright to me from the bottom of that well ; there was such a company of them ; they were so glad in their lustrous revelry ; and they had such space to move in ! I was alone, sad to despair, in a strange element, prisoned, and a solitary gazer upon their mocking chorus. And yet there was nothing else with which I could hold communion !

" I turned upon my breast and struck out almost frantically once more. The stars were forgotten ; the moon, the very world of which I as yet formed a part, my poor Mary herself, were forgotten. I thought only of the strong man there perishing ; of me in my lusty manhood, in the sharp vigour of my dawning prime, with faculties illimitable, with senses all alert, battling there with physical obstacles which men like myself had brought together for my undoing. The Eternal could never have willed this thing ! I could not and I would not perish thus. And I grew strong in insolence of self-trust ; and I laughed aloud as I dashed the sluggish water from side to side.

" Then came an emotion of pity for myself—of wild regret ; of sorrow, O, infinite for a fate so desolate, a doom so dreary, so heart-sickening ! You may laugh at the contradiction if you will, sir, but I felt that I could sacrifice my own life on the instant, to redeem another fellow-creature from such a place of horror, from an end so piteous. My soul and my vital spirit seemed in that desperate moment to be separating ; while one in parting grieved over the deplorable fate of the other.

"And then I prayed! I prayed, why or wherefore I know not. It was not from fear. It could not have been in hope. The days of miracles are past, and there was no natural law by whose providential interposition I could be saved. I did not pray; it prayed of itself, my soul within me.

"Was the calmness that I now felt torpidity—the torpidity that precedes dissolution to the strong swimmer who, sinking from exhaustion, must at last add a bubble to the wave as he suffocates beneath the element which now denied his mastery? If it were so, how fortunate was it that my floating rod at that moment attracted my attention as it dashed through the water by me. I saw on the instant that a fish had entangled itself in the wire noose. The rod quivered, plunged, came again to the surface, and rippled the water as it shot in arrowy flight from side to side of the tank. At last, driven toward the south-east corner of the Reservoir, the small end seemed to have got foul somewhere. The brazen butt, which, every time the fish sounded, was thrown up to the moon, now sank by its own weight, showing that the other end must be fast. But the cornered fish, evidently anchored somewhere by that short wire, floundered several times to the surface before I thought of striking out to the spot.

"The water is low now, and tolerably clear. You may see the very ledge there, sir, in yonder corner, on which the small end of my rod rested when I secured that pike with my hands. I did not take him from the slip-noose, however; but, standing upon the ledge, handled the rod in a workmanlike manner, as I flung that pound pickerel over the iron railing upon the top of the parapet. The rod, as I have told you, barely reached from the railing to the water. It was a heavy, strong bass rod which I had borrowed in the 'Spirit of the Times' office; and when I discovered that the fish at the end of the wire made a strong enough knot to prevent me from drawing my tackle away from the railing around which it twined itself as I threw, why, as you can at once see, I had but little difficulty in making my way up the face of the wall with such assistance. The ladder which attracted your notice is, as you see, lashed to the iron railing in the identical spot where I thus made my escape; and, for fear of similar accidents, they have placed another one in the corresponding corner of the other compartment of the tank ever since my remarkable night's adventure in the Reservoir."

CHARLES FENNO HOFFMAN

BEN BLOWER'S STORY

"ARE you sure that's the *Flame* over by the shore?"

"Certing, manny! I could tell her pipes acrost the Mazoura."

"And you will overhaul her?"

"Won't we though! I tell ye, strannger, so sure as my name's Ben Blower, that that last tar-bar'l I hove in the furnace has put jist the smart chance of go-ahead into us to cut off the *Flame* from yonder pint, or send our boat to kingdom come."

"The devil!" exclaimed a bystander who, intensely interested in the race, was leaning the while against the partitions of the boiler-room. "I've chosen a nice place to see the sun, near this infernal powder-barrel."

"Not so bad as if you were in it," coolly observed Ben as the other walked rapidly away.

"As if he were in it! in what? in the boiler?"

"Certing! Don't folks sometimes go into bilers, manny?"

"I should think there'd be other parts of the boat more comfortable."

"That's right; poking fun at me at once't: but wait till we get through this brush with the old *Flame* and I'll tell ye of a regular fixin scrape that a man may get into. It's true, too, every word of it, as sure as my name's Ben Blower." . . .

"You have seen the *Flame* then afore, strannger? Six year ago, when new upon the river, she was a raal out and outer, I tell ye. I was at that time a hand aboard of her. Yes, I belonged to her at the time of her great race with the *Go-liar*. You've heern, mahap, of the blow-up by which we lost it. They made a great fuss about it; but it was nothing but a mere fiz of hot water after all. Only the springing of a few rivets, which loosened a biler-plate or two, and let out a thin spirting upon some niggers that hadn't sense enough to get out of the way. Well, the *Go-liar* took off our passengers, and we ran into Smasher's Landing to repair damages, and bury the poor fools that were killed. Here we laid

for a matter of thirty hours or so, and got things to rights on board for a bran new start. There was some carpenters' work yet to be done, but the captain said that that might be fixed off jist as well when we were under way—we had worked hard—the weather was sour, and we needn't do anything more jist now—we might take that afternoon to ourselves, but the next morning he'd get up steam bright and airy, and we'd all come out *new*. There was no temperance society at Smasher's Landing, and I went ashore upon a lark with some of the hands."

I omit the worthy Benjamin's adventures upon land, and, despairing of fully conveying his language in its original Doric force, will not hesitate to give the rest of his singular narrative in my own words, save where, in a few instances, I can recall his precise phraseology, which the reader will easily recognise.

"The night was raw and sleety when I regained the deck of our boat. The officers, instead of leaving a watch above, had closed up everything, and shut themselves in the cabin. The fire-room only was open. The boards dashed from the outside by the explosion had not yet been replaced. The floor of the room was wet, and there was scarcely a corner which afforded a shelter from the driving storm. I was about leaving the room, resigned to sleep in the open air, and now bent only upon getting under the lee of some bulkhead that would protect me against the wind. In passing out I kept my arms stretched forward to feel my way in the dark, but my feet came in contact with a heavy iron lid; I stumbled and, as I fell, struck one of my hands into the 'manhole' (I think this was the name he gave to the oval-shaped opening in the head of the boiler), through which the smith had entered to make his repairs. I fell with my arm thrust so far into the aperture that I received a pretty smart blow in the face as it came in contact with the head of the boiler, and I did not hesitate to drag my body after it the moment I recovered from this stunning effect, and ascertained my whereabouts. In a word, I crept into the boiler, resolved to pass the rest of the night there. The place was dry and sheltered. Had my bed been softer I would have had all that man could desire; as it was, I slept, and slept soundly.

"I should mention though, that, before closing my eyes, I several times shifted my position. I had gone first to the farthest end of the boiler, then again I had crawled back to the manhole, to put my hand out and feel that it was really still open. The warmest place was at the farther end, where I finally established myself, and that I knew from the first. It was foolish in me to think that the opening through which I had just entered could be closed without my hearing it, and that, too, when no one was astir but myself:

but the blow on the side of my face made me a little nervous perhaps ; besides, I never could bear to be shut up in any place—it always gives a wild-like feeling about the head.

“ You may laugh, stranger, but I believe I should suffocate in an empty church if I once felt that I was shut up in it that I could not get out. I have met men afore now just like me, or worse rather, much worse—men that it made sort of furious to be tied down to anything, yet so soft-like and contradictory in their natures that you might lead them anywhere so long as they didn’t feel the string. Stranger, it takes all sorts of people to make a world ; and we may have a good many of the worst kind of white men here out west. But I have seen folks upon this river—quiet-looking chaps, too, as ever you see—who were so teetotally *carankterankterous* that they’d shoot the doctor who’d tell them they couldn’t live when ailing, and make a die of it, just out of spite, when told they *must* get well. Yes, fellows as fond of the good things of earth as you and I, yet who’d rush like mad right over the gang-plank of life if once brought to believe that they had to stay in this world whether they wanted to leave it or not. Thunder and bees ! if such a fellow as that had heard the cocks crow as I did—awakened to find darkness about him—darkness so thick you might cut it with a knife—heard other sounds, too, to tell that it was morning, and scrambling to fumble for that manhole, found it, too, black—closed—black and even as the rest of the iron coffin around him, closed, with not a rivet-hole to let God’s light and air in—why—why—he’d a *swounded* right down on the spot, as I did, and I ain’t ashamed to own it to no white man.”

The big drops actually stood upon the poor fellow’s brow, as he now paused for a moment in the recital of his terrible story. He passed his hand over his rough features, and resumed it with less agitation of manner.

“ How long I may have remained there senseless I don’t know. The doctors have since told me it must have been a sort of fit—more like an apoplexy than a swoon, for the attack finally passed off in sleep. Yes, I slept ; I know *that*, for I dreamed—dreamed a heap o’ things afore I awoke : there is but one dream, however, that I have ever been able to recall distinctly, and that must have come on shortly before I recovered my consciousness. My resting-place through the night had been, as I have told you, at the far end of the boiler. ~ Well, I now dreamed that the manhole was still open, and, what seems curious, rather than laughable, if you take it in connection with other things, I fancied that my legs had been so stretched in the long walk I had taken the evening before that they now reached the whole length of the boiler, and extended through the opening.

"At first (in my dreaming reflections) it was a comfortable thought, that no one could now shut up the manhole without awakening me. But soon it seemed as if my feet, which were on the outside, were becoming drenched in the storm which had originally driven me to seek this shelter. I felt the chilling rain upon my extremities. They grew colder and colder, and their numbness gradually extended upward to other parts of my body. It seemed, however, that it was only the under side of my person that was thus strangely visited. I lay upon my back, and it must have been a species of nightmare that afflicted me, for I knew at last that I was dreaming, yet felt it impossible to rouse myself. A violent fit of coughing restored at last my powers of volition. The water, which had been slowly rising around me, had rushed into my mouth ; I awoke to hear the rapid strokes of the pump which was driving it into the boiler !

"My whole condition—no—not all of it—not yet—my *present* condition flashed with new horror upon me. But I did not again swoon. The choking sensation which had made me faint when I first discovered how I was entombed gave way to a livelier though less overpowering emotion. I shrieked even as I started from my slumber. The previous discovery of the closed aperture, with the instant oblivion that followed, seemed only a part of my dream, and I threw my arms about and looked eagerly for the opening by which I had entered the horrid place—yes, looked for it, and felt for it, though it was the terrible conviction that it was closed—a second time brought home to me—which prompted my frenzied cry. Every sense seemed to have tenfold acuteness, yet not one to act in unison with another. I shrieked again and again—imploringly—desperately—savagely. I filled the hollow chamber with my cries, till its iron walls seemed to tingle around me. The dull strokes of the accursed pump seemed only to mock at, while they deadened, my screams.

"At last I gave myself up. It is the struggle against our fate which frenzies the mind. We cease to fear when we cease to hope. I gave myself up, and then I grew calm !

"I was resigned to die—resigned even to my mode of death. It was not, I thought, so very new after all, as to awaken unwonted horror in a man. Thousands have been sunk to the bottom of the ocean shut up in the holds of vessels—beating themselves against the battened hatches—dragged down from the upper world shrieking, not for life, but for death only beneath the eye and amid the breath of heaven. Thousands have endured that appalling kind of suffocation. I would die only as many a better man had died before me. I *could* meet such a death. I said so—I thought so—I felt so—felt so, I mean, for a minute—or more ; ten minutes

it may have been—or but an instant of time. I know not, nor does it matter if I could compute it. There *was* a time, then, when I was resigned to my fate. But, Heaven! was I resigned to it in the shape in which next it came to appal? Stranger, I felt that water growing hot about my limbs, though it was yet mid-leg deep. I felt it, and in the same moment heard the roar of the furnace that was to turn it into steam before it could get deep enough to drown one!

“You shudder. It was hideous. But did I shrink and shrivel, and crumble down upon that iron floor, and lose my senses in that horrid agony of fear? No! though my brain swam and the life-blood that curdled at my heart seemed about to stagnate there for ever, still *I knew*! I was too hoarse—too hopeless—from my previous efforts, to cry out more. But I struck—feebly at first, and then strongly—frantically with my clenched fist against the sides of the boiler. There were people moving near who *must* hear my blows! Could not I hear the grating of chains, the shuffling of feet, the very rustle of a rope—hear them all, within a few inches of me? I did; but the gurgling water that was growing hotter and hotter around my extremities made more noise within the steaming cauldron than did my frenzied blows against its sides.

“Latterly I had hardly changed my position, but now the growing heat of the water made me splash to and fro; lifting myself wholly out of it was impossible, but I could not remain quiet. I stumbled upon something; it was a mallet!—a chance tool the smith had left there by accident. With what wild joy did I seize it—with what eager confidence did I now deal my first blows with it against the walls of my prison! But scarce had I intermitted them for a moment when I heard the clang of the iron door as the fireman flung it wide to feed the flames that were to torture me. My knocking was unheard, though I could hear him toss the sticks into the furnace beneath me, and drive to the door when his infernal oven was fully crammed.

“Had I yet a hope? I had; but it rose in my mind side by side with the fear that I might now become the agent of preparing myself a more frightful death. Yes; when I thought of that furnace with its fresh-fed flames curling beneath the iron upon which I stood—a more frightful death even than that of being boiled alive! Had I discovered that mallet but a short time sooner—but no matter, I would by its aid resort to the only expedient now left.

“It was this. I remembered having a marline-spike in my pocket, and in less time than I have taken in hinting at the consequences of thus using it, I had made an impression upon the sides of the boiler, and soon succeeded in driving it through. The water gushed through the aperture—would they see it? No; the jet

could only play against a wooden partition which must hide the stream from view ; it must trickle down upon the decks before the leakage would be discovered. Should I drive another hole to make that leakage greater ? Why, the water within seemed already to be sensibly diminished, so hot had become that which remained ; should more escape, would I not hear it bubble and hiss upon the fiery plates of iron that were already scorching the soles of my feet ? . . .

" Ah ! there is a movement—voices—I hear them calling for a crowbar. The bulkhead cracks as they pry off the planking. They have seen the leak—they are trying to get at it ! Good God ! why do they not first dampen the fire ? why do they call for the—the—

" Stranger, look at that finger : it can never regain its natural size ; but it has already done all the service that man could expect from so humble a member. *Sir, that hole would have been plugged up on the instant unless I had jammed my finger through !*

" I heard the cry of horror as they saw it without—the shout to drown the fire—the first stroke of the cold-water pump. They say, too, that I was conscious when they took me out—but I—I remember nothing more till they brought a julep to my bedside afterwards, *AND that julep !—*"

" Cooling, was it ? "

" STRANNGER !!! "

Ben turned away his head and wept—He could no more.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

1809-1849

THE PURLOINED LETTER

Nil sapientiæ odiosius acumine nimio.—SENECA.

AT Paris just after dark one gusty evening in the autumn of 18—, I was enjoying the twofold luxury of meditation and a meerschaum, in company with my friend, C. Auguste Dupin, in his little back library or book-closet, *au troisième*, No. 33 Rue Dunôt, Faubourg St. Germain. For one hour at least we had maintained a profound silence; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening: I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Rogêt. I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G—, the Prefect of the Parisian police.

We gave him a hearty welcome; for there was nearly half as much of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for several years. We had been sitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again, without doing so, upon G—'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend, about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble.

"If it is any point requiring reflection," observed Dupin, as he forbore to enkindle the wick, "we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark."

"That is another of your odd notions," said the Prefect, who had a fashion of calling everything "odd" that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of "oddities."

"Very true," said Dupin, as he supplied his visitor with a pipe, and rolled towards him a comfortable chair.

"And what is the difficulty now?" I asked. "Nothing more in the assassination way, I hope?"

"Oh, no; nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is *very* simple indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves; but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively *odd*."

"Simple and odd," said Dupin.

"Why, yes; and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we have all been a good deal puzzled because the affair *is* so simple, and yet baffles us altogether."

"Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault," said my friend.

"What nonsense you *do* talk!" replied the Prefect, laughing heartily.

"Perhaps the mystery is a little *too* plain," said Dupin.

"Oh, good heavens! who ever heard of such an idea?"

"A little *too* self-evident."

"Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho!" roared our visitor, profoundly amused. "O Dupin, you will be the death of me yet!"

"And what, after all, *is* the matter on hand?" I asked.

"Why, I will tell you," replied the Prefect, as he gave a long, steady, and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair. "I will tell you in a few words; but, before I begin, let me caution you that this is an affair demanding the greatest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now hold, were it known that I confided it to any one."

"Proceed," said I.

"Or not," said Dupin.

"Well, then; I have received personal information, from a very high quarter, that a certain document of the last importance has been purloined from the royal apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; he was seen to take it. It is known also, that it still remains in his possession."

"How is this known?" asked Dupin.

"It is clearly inferred," replied the Prefect, "from the nature of the document, and from the non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise from its passing *out* of the robber's possession—that is to say, from his employing it as he must design in the end to employ it."

"Be a little more explicit," I said.

"Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a certain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable." The Prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

"Still I do not quite understand," said Dupin.

"No? Well: the disclosure of the document to a third person, who shall be nameless, would bring in question the honour of a personage of most exalted station; and this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendancy over the illustrious personage whose honour and peace are so jeopardised."

"But this ascendancy," I interposed, "would depend upon the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber. Who would dare——"

"The thief," said G——, "is the Minister D——, who dares all things, those unbecoming as well as those becoming a man. The method of the theft was not less ingenious than bold. The document in question—a letter, to be frank—had been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal *boudoir*. During its perusal she was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personage from whom especially it was her wish to conceal it. After a hurried and vain endeavour to thrust it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus unexposed, the letter escaped notice. At this juncture enters the Minister D——. His lynx eye immediately perceives the paper, recognises the handwriting of the address, observes the confusion of the personage addressed, and fathoms her secret. After some business transactions, hurried through in his ordinary manner, he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens it, pretends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses, for some fifteen minutes, upon the public affairs. At length, in taking leave, he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but, of course, dared not call attention to the act, in the presence of the third personage who stood at her elbow. The Minister decamped, leaving his own letter—one of no importance—upon the table."

"Here, then," said Dupin to me, "you have precisely what you demand to make the ascendancy complete—the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber."

"Yes," replied the Prefect; "and the power thus attained has, for some months past, been wielded, for political purposes, to a very dangerous extent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced, every day, of the necessity of reclaiming her letter. But this, of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven to despair, she has committed the matter to me."

"Than whom," said Dupin, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, "no more sagacious agent could, I suppose, be desired, or even imagined."

"You flatter me," replied the Prefect; "but it is possible that some such opinion may have been entertained."

"It is clear," said I, "as you observe, that the letter is still in the possession of the Minister; since it is this possession, and not any employment of the letter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs."

"True," said G——; "and upon this conviction I proceeded. My first care was to make thorough search of the Minister's hotel; and here my chief embarrassment lay in the necessity of searching without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have been warned of the danger which would result from giving him reason to suspect our designs."

"But," said I, "you are quite *au fait* in these investigations. The Parisian police have done this thing often before."

"Oh yes; and for this reason I did not despair. The habits of the Minister gave me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master's apartments, and, being chiefly Neapolitans, are readily made drunk. I have keys, as you know, with which I can open any chamber of cabinet in Paris. For three months a night has not passed, during the greater part of which I have not been engaged, personally, in ransacking the D—— Hôtel. My honour is interested, and, to mention a great secret, the reward is enormous. So I did not abandon the search until I had become fully satisfied that the thief is a more astute man than myself. I fancy that I have investigated every nook and corner of the premises in which it is possible that the paper can be concealed."

"But is it not possible," I suggested, "that although the letter may be in possession of the Minister, as it unquestionably is, he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own premises?"

"This is barely possible," said Dupin. "The present peculiar condition of affairs at Court, and especially of those intrigues in which D—— is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document—its susceptibility of being produced at a moment's notice—a point of nearly equal importance with its possession."

"Its susceptibility of being produced?" said I.

"That is to say, of being *destroyed*," said Dupin.

"True," I observed; "the paper is clearly then upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the Minister, we may consider that as out of the question."

"Entirely," said the Prefect. "He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched under my own inspection."

"You might have spared yourself this trouble," said Dupin.

"D——, I presume, is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have anticipated these waylayings, as a matter of course."

"Not *altogether* a fool," said G——; "but then he's a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool."

"True," said Dupin, after a long and thoughtful whiff from his meerschaum, "although I have been guilty of certain doggerel myself."

"Suppose you detail," said I, "the particulars of your search."

"Why, the fact is we took our time, and we searched *everywhere*. I have had long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room; devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furniture of each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that, to a properly trained police agent, such a thing as a *secret* drawer is impossible. Any man is a dolt who permits a 'secret' drawer to escape him in a search of this kind. The thing is so plain. There is a certain amount of bulk—of space—to be accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftieth part of a line could not escape us. After the cabinets we took the chairs. The cushions we probed with the fine long needles you have seen me employ. From the tables we removed the tops."

"Why so?"

"Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly arranged piece of furniture, is removed by the person wishing to conceal an article; then the leg is excavated, the article deposited within the cavity, and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bedposts are employed in the same way."

"But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?" I asked.

"By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cotton be placed around it. Besides, in our case, we were obliged to proceed without noise."

"But you could not have removed—you could not have taken to pieces *all* articles of furniture in which it would have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed into a thin, spiral roll not differing much in shape or bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You did not take to pieces *all* the chairs?"

"Certainly not; but we did better—we examined the rungs of every chair in the hotel, and, indeed, the jointings of every description of furniture, by the aid of a most powerful microscope. Had there been any traces of recent disturbance we should not have failed to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any disorder in the glueing—any unusual gaping in the joints—would have sufficed to ensure detection."

"I presume you looked to the mirrors, between the boards and

the plates, and you probed the beds and the bedclothes, as well as the curtains and carpets."

"That of course; and when we had absolutely completed every particle of the furniture in this way, then we examined the house itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be missed; then we scrutinised each individual square inch throughout the premises, including the two houses immediately adjoining, with the microscope, as before."

"The two houses adjoining!" I exclaimed; "you must have had a great deal of trouble."

"We had; but the reward offered is prodigious."

"You include the *grounds* about the houses?"

"All the grounds are paved with brick. They gave us comparatively little trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it undisturbed."

"You looked among D——'s papers, of course, and into the books of the library?"

"Certainly; we opened every package and parcel; we not only opened every book, but we turned over every leaf in each volume, not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according to the fashion of some of our police officers. We also measured the thickness of every book-cover, with the most accurate admeasurement, and applied to each the most jealous scrutiny of the microscope. Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with, it would have been utterly impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the binder, we carefully probed longitudinally, with the needies."

"You explored the floors beneath the carpets?"

"Beyond doubt. We removed every carpet, and examined the boards with the microscope."

"And the paper on the walls?"

"Yes."

"You looked into the cellars?"

"We did."

"Then," I said, "you have been making a miscalculation, and the letter is *not* upon the premises, as you suppose."

"I fear you are right there," said the Prefect. "And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?"

"To make a thorough research of the premises."

"That is absolutely needless," replied G——. "I am not more sure that I breathe than I am that the letter is not at the hotel."

"I have no better advice to give you," said Dupin. "You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?"

"Oh yes!" And here the Prefect, producing a memorandum-book, proceeded to read aloud a minute account of the internal, and

especially of the external appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing the perusal of this description, he took his departure more entirely depressed in spirits than I had ever known the good gentleman before.

In about a month afterwards he paid us another visit, and found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a chair and entered into some ordinary conversation. At length I said—

“Well, but G——, what of the purloined letter? I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such thing as over-reaching the Minister?”

“Confound him, say I—yes: I made the re-examination, however, as Dupin suggested—but it was all labour lost, as I knew it would be.”

“How much was the reward offered, did you say?” asked Dupin.

“Why, a very great deal—a *very* liberal reward—I don’t like to say how much, precisely; but I *will* say, that I wouldn’t mind giving my individual cheque for fifty thousand francs to any one who could obtain me that letter. The fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day; and the reward has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do no more than I have done.”

“Why, yes,” said Dupin drawlingly, between the whiffs of his meerschauum, “I really—think, G——, you have not exerted yourself—to the utmost—in this matter. You might—do a little more, I think, eh?”

“How?—in what way?”

“Why—puff, puff—you might—puff, puff—employ counsel in the matter, eh?—puff, puff, puff. Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy?”

“No; hang Abernethy!”

“To be sure! hang him and welcome. But once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of sponging upon this Abernethy for a medical opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private company, he insinuated his case to the physician, as that of an imaginary individual.

“‘We will suppose,’ said the miser, ‘that his symptoms are such and such; now, doctor, what would *you* have directed him to take?’

“‘Take!’ said Abernethy, ‘why, take *advice*, to be sure.’”

“But,” said the Prefect, a little discomposed, “I am *perfectly* willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would *really* give fifty thousand francs to any one who would aid me in the matter.”

“In that case,” replied Dupin, opening a drawer, and producing a cheque-book, “you may as well fill up me a cheque for the amount mentioned. When you have signed it, I will hand you the letter.”

I was astounded. The Prefect appeared absolutely thunder-stricken. For some minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my friend with open mouth, and eyes that seemed starting from their sockets; then, apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen, and after several pauses and vacant stares, finally filled up and signed a cheque for fifty thousand francs, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The latter examined it carefully and deposited it in his pocket-book; then, unlocking an *escritoire*, took thence a letter and gave it to the Prefect. This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, opened it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambling and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the cheque.

When he had gone, my friend entered into some explanations.

"The Parisian police," he said, "are exceedingly able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning, and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which their duties seem chiefly to demand. Thus, when G—— detailed to us his mode of searching the premises at the Hôtel D——, I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory investigation—so far as his labours extended."

"So far as his labours extended?" said I.

"Yes," said Dupin. "The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute perfection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it."

I merely laughed—but he seemed quite serious in all that he said.

"The measures, then," he continued, "were good in their kind, and well executed; their defect lay in their being inapplicable to the case, and to the man. A certain set of highly ingenious resources are, with the Prefect, a sort of Procrustean bed, to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs by being too deep or too shallow for the matter in hand; and many a schoolboy is a better reasoner than he. I knew one about eight years of age, whose success at guessing in the game of 'even and odd' attracted universal admiration. This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and demands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one; if wrong, he loses one. The boy to whom I allude won all the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guessing; and this lay in mere observation and admeasurement of the astuteness of his opponents. For example, an arrant simpleton is his opponent, and, holding up his closed hand, asks, 'Are they even or odd?' Our schoolboy

replies 'Odd,' and loses ; but upon the second trial he wins, for he then says to himself, 'The simpleton had them even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the second ; I will therefore guess odd'—he guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a degree above the first, he would have reasoned thus : 'This fellow finds that in the first instance I guessed odd, and, in the second, he will propose to himself, upon the first impulse, a simple variation from even to odd, as did the first simpleton ; but then a second thought will suggest that this is too simple a variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even'—he guesses even, and wins. Now this mode of reasoning in the school-boy, whom his fellows termed 'lucky'—what, in its last analysis, is it ? "

"It is merely," I said, "an identification of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent."

"It is," said Dupin ; "and upon inquiring of the boy by what means he effected the *thorough* identification in which his success consisted, I received answer as follows : 'When I wish to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good, or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accordance with the expression of his, and then wait to see what thoughts or sentiments arise in my mind or heart, as if to match or correspond with the expression.' This response of the schoolboy lies at the bottom of all the spurious profundity which has been attributed to Rochefoucauld, to La Bougive, to Machiavelli, and to Campanella."

"And the identification," I said, "of the reasoner's intellect with that of his opponent depends, if I understand you aright, upon the accuracy with which the opponent's intellect is admeasured."

"For its practical value it depends upon this," replied Dupin ; "and the Prefect and his cohort fail so frequently, first, by default of his identification, and, secondly, by ill-admeasurement, or rather through non-admeasurement, of the intellect with which they are engaged. They consider only their *own* ideas of ingenuity ; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which *they* would have hidden it. They are right in this much—that their own ingenuity is a faithful representative of that of *the mass* ; but when the cunning of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon foils them, of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below. They have no variation of principle in their investigations ; at best, when urged by some unusual emergency—by some extraordinary reward—they extend or exaggerate their old modes of *practice*, without touching their principles. What, for example, in this case

of D——, has been done to vary the principle of action? What is all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinising with the microscope, and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches—what is it all but an exaggeration of *the application* of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of notions regarding human ingenuity, to which the Prefect, in the long routine of his duty, has been accustomed? Do you not see he has taken it for granted that *all* men proceed to conceal a letter—not exactly in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg—but, at least, in *some* out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by the same tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a letter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair-leg? And do you not see also, that such *recherchés* nooks for concealment are adapted only for ordinary occasions, and would be adopted only by ordinary intellects; for, in all cases of concealment, a disposal of the article concealed—a disposal of it in this *recherché* manner—is, in the very first instance, presumable and presumed; and thus its discovery depends, not at all upon the acumen, but altogether upon the mere care, patience, and determination of the seekers; and where the case is of importance—or, what amounts to the same thing in the policial eyes, when the reward is of magnitude—the qualities in question have *never* been known to fail. You will now understand what I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter been hidden anywhere within the limits of the Prefect's examination—in other words, had the principle of its concealment been comprehended within the principles of the Prefect—its discovery would have been a matter altogether beyond question. This functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the supposition that the Minister is a fool, because he has acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets—this the Prefect *feels*; and he is merely guilty of a *non distributio medi* in thence inferring that all poets are fools.”

“But is this really the poet?” I asked. “There are two brothers, I know; and both have attained reputation in letters. The Minister, I believe, has written learnedly on the Differential Calculus. He is a mathematician, and no poet.”

“You are mistaken; I know him well; he is both. As poet *and* mathematician, he would reason well; as mere mathematician, he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the Prefect.”

“You surprise me,” I said, “by these opinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at naught the well-digested idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as *the* reason *par excellence*.”

“*Il y a à paraître*,” replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfort, “*que*

toute idée publique, toute convention reçue, est une sottise, car elle a convenue au plus grand nombre. The mathematicians, I grant you, have done their best to promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have insinuated the term 'analysis' into application to algebra. The French are the originators of this particular deception; but if a term is of any importance—if words derive any value from applicability—then 'analysis' conveys 'algebra' about as much as, in Latin, '*ambitus*' implies 'ambition,' '*religio*' 'religion,' or '*homines honesti*' a set of *honourable* men."

"You have a quarrel on hand, I see," said I, "with some of the algebraists of Paris; but proceed."

"I dispute the availability, and thus the value, of that reason which is cultivated in any especial form other than the abstractly logical. I dispute, in particular, the reason educed by mathematical study. The mathematics are the science of form and quantity; mathematical reasoning is merely logic applied to observation upon form and quantity. The great error lies in supposing that even the truths of what is called *pure* algebra are abstract or general truths. And this error is so egregious that I am confounded at the universality with which it has been received. Mathematical axioms are *not* axioms of general truth. What is true of *relation*—of form and quantity—is often grossly false in regard to morals, for example. In this latter science it is very usually *untrue* that the aggregated parts are equal to the whole. In chemistry also the axiom fails. In the consideration of motive it fails; for two motives, each of a given value, have not, necessarily, a value when united, equal to the sum of their values apart. There are numerous other mathematical truths which are only truths within the limits of *relation*. But the mathematician argues, from his *finite truths*, through habit, as if they were of an absolutely general applicability—as the world indeed imagines them to be. Bryant, in his very learned *Mythology*, mentions an analogous source of error, when he says that 'although the Pagan fables are not believed, yet we forget ourselves continually, and make inferences from them as existing realities.' With the algebraists, however, who are Pagans themselves, the 'Pagan fables' *are* believed, and the inferences are made, not so much through lapse of memory, as through an unaccountable addling of the brains. In short, I never yet encountered the mere mathematician who could be trusted out of equal roots, or one who did not clandestinely hold it as a point of his faith that $x^2 + px$ was absolutely and unconditionally equal to q . Say to one of these gentlemen, by way of experiment, if you please, that you believe occasions may occur

where $x^2 + px$ is *not* altogether equal to q , and having made him understand what you mean, get out of his reach as speedily as convenient, for, beyond doubt, he will endeavour to knock you down.

"I mean to say," continued Dupin, while I merely laughed at his last observations, "that if the Minister had been no more than a mathematician, the Prefect would have been under no necessity of giving me this cheque. I knew him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my measures were adapted to his capacity, with reference to the circumstances by which he was surrounded. I knew him as a courtier, too, and as a bold *intrigant*. Such a man, I considered, could not fail to be aware of the ordinary policial modes of action. He could not have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjected. He must have foreseen, I reflected, the secret investigations of his premises. His frequent absences from home at night, which were hailed by the Prefect as certain aids to his success, I regarded only as ruses, to afford opportunity for thorough search to the police, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction to which G——, in fact, did finally arrive—the conviction that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt, also, that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to you just now, concerning the invariable principle of policial action in searches for articles concealed—I felt that this whole train of thought would necessarily pass through the mind of the Minister. It would imperatively lead him to despise all the ordinary *nooks* of concealment. He could not, I reflected, be so weak as not to see that the most intricate and remote recess of his hotel would be as open as his commonest closets to the eyes, to the probes, to the gimlets, and to the microscopes of the Prefect. I saw, in fine, that he would be driven, as a matter of course, to *simplicity*, if not deliberately induced to it as a matter of choice. You will remember, perhaps, how desperately the Prefect laughed when I suggested, upon our first interview, that it was just possible this mystery troubled him so much on account of its being so *very* self-evident."

"Yes," said I, "I remember his merriment well. I really thought he would have fallen into convulsions."

"The material world," continued Dupin, "abounds with very strict analogies to the immaterial; and thus some colour of truth has been given to the rhetorical dogma, that metaphor, or simile, may be made to strengthen an argument, as well as to embellish a description. The principle of the *vis inertiae*, for example, seems to be identical in physics and metaphysics. It is not more true in the former, that a large body is with more difficulty set in motion than a smaller one and that its subsequent momentum is commensurate

with this difficulty, than it is in the latter, that intellects of the vaster capacity, while more forcible, more constant, and more eventful in their movements than those of inferior grade, are yet the less readily moved, and more embarrassed and full of hesitation in the first few steps of their progress. Again, have you ever noticed which of the street signs over the shop-doors are the most attractive of attention ? ”

“ I have never given the matter a thought,” I said.

“ There is a game of puzzles,” he resumed, “ which is played upon a map. One party playing requires another to find a given word—the name of town, river, state or empire—any word, in short, upon the motley and perplexed surface of the chart. A novice in the game generally seeks to embarrass his opponents by giving them the most minutely lettered names ; but the adept selects such words as stretch, in large characters, from one end of the chart to the other. These, like the over-largely lettered signs and placards of the street, escape observation by dint of being excessively obvious ; and here the physical oversight is precisely analogous with the moral inapprehension by which the intellect suffers to pass unnoticed those considerations which are too obtrusively and too palpably self-evident. But this is a point, it appears, somewhat above or beneath the understanding of the Prefect. He never once thought it probable, or possible, that the Minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole world, by way of best preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it.

“ But the more I reflected upon the daring, dashing, and discriminating ingenuity of D—— ; upon the fact that the document must always have been *at hand*, if he intended to use it to good purpose ; and upon the decisive evidence, obtained by the Prefect, that it was not hidden within the limits of that dignitary’s ordinary search—the more satisfied I became that, to conceal this letter, the Minister had resorted to the comprehensive and sagacious expedient of not attempting to conceal it at all.

“ Full of these ideas, I prepared myself with a pair of green spectacles, and called one fine morning, quite by accident, at the Ministerial hotel. I found D—— at home, yawning, lounging, and dawdling, as usual, and pretending to be in the last extremity of *ennui*. He is, perhaps, the most really energetic human being now alive—but that is only when nobody sees him.

“ To be even with him, I complained of my weak eyes, and lamented the necessity of the spectacles, under cover of which I cautiously and thoroughly surveyed the whole apartment, while seemingly intent only upon the conversation of my host.

“ I paid especial attention to a large writing-table near which he sat, and upon which lay confusedly some miscellaneous letters and

other papers, with one or two musical instruments and a few books. Here, however, after a long and very deliberate scrutiny, I saw nothing to excite particular suspicion.

"At length my eyes, in going the circuit of the room, fell upon a trumpery filigree card-rack of pasteboard, that hung dangling by a dirty blue ribbon, from a little brass knob just beneath the middle of the mantelpiece. In this rack, which had three or four compartments, were five or six visiting cards and a solitary letter. This last was much soiled and crumpled. It was torn nearly in two, across the middle—as if a design, in the first instance, to tear it entirely up as worthless had been altered, or stayed, in the second. It had a large black seal, bearing the D— cipher *very* conspicuously, and was addressed, in a diminutive female hand, to D—, the Minister, himself. It was thrust carelessly, and even, as it seemed, contemptuously, into one of the uppermost divisions of the rack.

"No sooner had I glanced at this letter than I concluded it to be that of which I was in search. To be sure, it was, to all appearance, radically different from the one of which the Prefect had read us so minute a description. Here the seal was large and black, with the D— cipher; there it was small and red, with the ducal arms of the S— family. Here, the address, to the Minister, was diminutive and feminine; there the superscription, to a certain royal personage, was markedly bold and decided; the size alone formed a point of correspondence. But then the *radicalness* of these differences, which was excessive; the dirt; the soiled and torn condition of the paper, so inconsistent with the *true* methodical habits of D—, and so suggestive of a design to delude the beholder into an idea of the worthlessness of the document; these things, together with the hyperobtrusive situation of this document, full in the view of every visitor, and thus exactly in accordance with the conclusions to which I had previously arrived; these things, I say, were strongly corroborative of suspicion, in one who came with the intention to suspect.

"I protracted my visit as long as possible, and, while I maintained a most animated discussion with the Minister, upon a topic which I knew well had never failed to interest and excite him, I kept my attention really riveted upon the letter. In this examination, I committed to memory its external appearance and arrangement in the rack; and also fell, at length, upon a discovery, which set at rest whatever trivial doubt I might have entertained. In scrutinising the edges of the paper, I observed them to be more *chafed* than seemed necessary. They presented the *broken* appearance which is manifested when a stiff paper, having been once folded and pressed with a folder, is refolded in a reversed direction, in the same creases

or edges which had formed the original fold. This discovery was sufficient. It was clear to me that the letter had been turned, as a glove, inside out, redirected and resealed. I bade the Minister good-morning, and took my departure at once, leaving a gold snuff-box upon the table.

"The next morning I called for the snuff-box, when we resumed, quite eagerly, the conversation of the preceding day. While thus engaged, however, a loud report, as if of a pistol, was heard immediately beneath the windows of the hotel, and was succeeded by a series of fearful screams, and the shoutings of a terrified mob. D—— rushed to a casement, threw it open, and looked out. In the meantime, I stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, put it in my pocket, and replaced it by a facsimile (so far as regards externals) which I had carefully prepared at my lodgings—imitating the D—— cipher, very readily, by means of a seal formed of bread.

"The disturbance in the street had been occasioned by the frantic behaviour of a man with a musket. He had fired it among a crowd of women and children. It proved, however, to have been without ball, and the fellow was suffered to go his way as a lunatic or a drunkard. When he had gone, D—— came from the window, whither I had followed him immediately upon securing the object in view. Soon afterwards I bade him farewell. The pretended lunatic was a man in my own pay."

"But what purpose had you," I asked, "in replacing the letter by a facsimile? Would it not have been better at the first visit to have seized it openly, and departed?"

"D——," replied Dupin, "is a desperate man, and a man of nerve. His hotel, too, is not without attendants devoted to his interests. Had I made the wild attempt you suggest, I might never have left the Ministerial presence alive. The good people of Paris might have heard of me no more. But I had an object apart from these considerations. You know my political prepossessions. In this matter I act as a partisan of the lady concerned. For eighteen months the Minister has had her in his power. She has now him in hers—since, being unaware that the letter is not in his possession, he will proceed with his exactions as if it was. Thus will he inevitably commit himself, at once, to his political destruction. His downfall, too, will not be more precipitate than awkward. It is all very well to talk about the *facilis descensus Averni*; but in all kinds of climbing, as Catalani said of singing, it is far more easy to get up than to come down. In the present instance I have no sympathy—at least no pity—for him who descends. He is that *monstrum horrendum*, an unprincipled man of genius. I confess, however, that I should like very well to know the precise character of his thoughts, when, being defied by her whom the Prefect terms 'a

certain personage,' he is reduced to opening the letter which I left for him in the card-rack."

"How? Did you put anything particular in it?"

"Why—it did not seem altogether right to leave the interior blank—that would have been insulting. D——, at Vienna once, did me an evil turn, which I told him, quite good-humouredly, that I should remember. So, as I knew he would feel some curiosity in regard to the identity of the person who had outwitted him, I thought it a pity not to give him a clue. He is well acquainted with my MS., and I just copied into the middle of the blank sheet the words:—

"——Un dessein si funeste,
S'il n'est digne d'Atrée, est digne de Thyeste.

They are to be found in Crébillon's *Atrée*."

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

Son cœur est un luth suspendu ;
Sitôt qu'on le touche il résonne.

DE BÉRANGER.

DURING the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country ; and at length found myself, as the shades of evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable ; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into every-day life—the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher ? It was a mystery all insoluble ; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of

the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression ; and acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder even more thrilling than before—upon the remodelled and inverted images of the grey sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood ; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country—a letter from him—which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than the personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness—of a mental disorder which oppressed him—and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best, and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more, was said—it was the apparent *heart* that went with his request—which allowed me no room for hesitation ; and I accordingly obeyed forthwith what I still considered a very singular summons.

Although as boys we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested of late in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognisable beauties, of musical science. I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honoured as it was, had put forth at no period any enduring branch ; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other—it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission from sire to son of the patrimony with the name, which had at length so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate

in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the "House of Usher"—an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.

I have said that the whole effect of my somewhat childish experiment—that of looking down within the tarn—had been to deepen the first singular impression. There can be no doubt that the consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition—for why should I not so term it?—served mainly to accelerate the increase itself. Such, I have long known, is the paradoxical law of all sentiments having terror as a basis. And it might have been for this reason only, that, when I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in the pool, there grew in my mind a strange fancy—a fancy so ridiculous, indeed, that I but mention it to show the vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me. I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity—an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the grey wall, and the silent tarn—a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

Shaking off from my spirit what *must* have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled webwork from the eaves. Yet all this was part from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old woodwork which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinising observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.

Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in waiting took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in my progress to the studio of his master. Much that I encountered on

the way contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which I have already spoken. While the objects around me—while the carvings of the ceilings, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, and the phantasmagoric armorial trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters to which, or to such as which, I had been accustomed from my infancy—while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this—I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up. On one of the staircases I met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought, wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation and passed on. The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into the presence of his master.

The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

Upon my entrance, Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first thought, of an overdone cordiality—of the constrained effort of the *ennuyé* man of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance, convinced me of his perfect sincerity. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy; hair of a more than weblike softness and tenuity; these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be

forgotten. And now in the mere exaggeration of the prevailing character of these features, and of the expression they were wont to convey, lay so much of change that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, even with effort, connect its Arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity.

In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence—an inconsistency; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to overcome an habitual trepidancy—an excessive nervous agitation. For something of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter than by reminiscences of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced from his peculiar physical conformation and temperament. His action was alternately vivacious and sullen. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision—that abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation—that leaden, self-balanced, and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement.

It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see me, and of the solace he expected me to afford him. He entered, at some length, into what he conceived to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional and a family evil, and one for which he despaired to find a remedy—a mere nervous affection, he immediately added, which would undoubtedly soon pass off. It displayed itself in a host of unnatural sensations. Some of these, as he detailed them, interested and bewildered me; although, perhaps, the terms, and the general manner of the narration, had their weight. He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odours of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror.

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. "I shall perish," said he, "I *must* perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect—in terror. In this

unnerved—in this pitiable condition—I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR.”

I learned, moreover, at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints, another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth—in regard to an influence whose supposititious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be restated—an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion, had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit—an effect which the *physique* of the grey walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had at length brought about upon the *morale* of his existence.

He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin—to the severe and long-continued illness—indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution—of a tenderly beloved sister—his sole companion for long years—his last and only relative on earth. “Her decease,” he said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, “would leave him (him the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers.” While he spoke, the Lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence, disappeared. I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread—and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of stupor oppressed me, as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door at length closed upon her, my glance sought instinctively and eagerly the countenance of the brother—but he had buried his face in his hands, and I could only perceive that a far more than ordinary wanness had overspread the emaciated fingers through which trickled many passionate tears.

The disease of the Lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character, were the unusual diagnosis. Hitherto she had steadily borne up against the pressure of her malady, and had not betaken herself finally to bed; but, on the closing of the evening of my arrival at the house, she succumbed (as her brother told me at night with inexpressible agitation) to the prostrating power of the destroyer; and I learned that the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I should obtain—that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more.

For several days ensuing, her name was unmentioned by either Usher or myself; and during this period I was busied in earnest endeavours to alleviate the melancholy of my friend. We painted and read together; or I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisations of his speaking guitar. And thus, as a closer and still closer intimacy admitted me more unreservedly into the recesses of his spirit, the more bitterly did I perceive the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe, in one unceasing radiation of gloom.

I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphurous lustre over all. His long improvised dirges will ring for ever in my ears. Among other things, I hold painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber. From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch, into vaguenesses at which I shuddered the more thrillingly, because I shuddered knowing not why—from these paintings (vivid as their images now are before me) I would in vain endeavour to educe more than a small portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. By the utter simplicity, by the nakedness of his designs, he arrested and overawed attention. If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me at least—in the circumstances then surrounding me—there arose out of the pure abstractions which the hypochondriac contrived to throw upon his canvas, an intensity of intolerable awe, no shadow of which felt I ever yet in the contemplation of the certainly glowing yet too concrete reveries of Fuseli.

One of the phantasmagoric conceptions of my friend, partaking not so rigidly of the spirit of abstraction, may be shadowed forth, although feebly, in words. A small picture presented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light, was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendour.

I have just spoken of that morbid condition of the auditory nerve

which rendered all music intolerable to the sufferer, with the exception of certain effects of stringed instruments. It was, perhaps, the narrow limits to which he thus confined himself upon the guitar, which gave birth, in great measure, to the fantastic character of his performances. But the fervid facility of his impromptus could not be so accounted for. They must have been, and were, in the notes, as well as in the words, of his wild fantasias (for he not unfrequently accompanied himself with rhymed verbal improvisations), the result of that intense mental collectedness and concentration to which I have previously alluded as observable only in particular moments of the highest artificial excitement. The words of one of these rhapsodies I have easily remembered. I was, perhaps, the more forcibly impressed with it, as he gave it, because, in the under or mystic current of its meaning, I fancied that I perceived, and for the first time, a full consciousness, on the part of Usher, of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne. The verses, which were entitled "The Haunted Palace," ran very nearly, if not accurately, thus :—

I

In the greenest of our valleys,
 By good angels tenanted,
 Once a fair and stately palace—
 Radiant palace—reared its head.
 In the monarch Thought's dominion—
 It stood there !
 Never seraph spread a pinion
 Over fabric half so fair.

II

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
 On its roof did float and flow
 (This—all this—was in the olden
 Time long ago) ;
 And every gentle air that dallied,
 In that sweet day,
 Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
 A winged odour went away.

III

Wanderers in that happy valley
 Through two luminous windows saw
 Spirits moving musically
 To a lute's well-tuned law,
 Round about a throne, where sitting
 (Porphyrogene !)
 He state his glory well befitting,
 The ruler of the realm was seen.

IV

And all with pearl and ruby glowing
Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing
And sparkling evermore,
A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king.

V

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch's high estate.
(Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow
Shall dawn upon him, desolate !)
And, round about his home, the glory
That blushed and bloomed
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

VI

And travellers now within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows, see
Vast forms that move fantastically
To a discordant melody ;
While, like a rapid ghastly river,
Through the pale door,
A hideous throng rush out for ever,
And laugh—but smile no more.

I well remember that suggestions arising from this ballad led us into a train of thought wherein there became manifest an opinion of Usher's, which I mention not so much on account of its novelty (for other men have thought thus), as on account of the pertinacity with which he maintained it. This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of all vegetable things. But, in his disordered fancy, the idea had assumed a more daring character, and trespassed, under certain conditions, upon the kingdom of inorganisation. I lack words to express the full extent, or the earnest *abandon* of his persuasion. The belief, however, was connected (as I have previously hinted) with the grey stones of the home of his forefathers. The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones—in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many fungi which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around—above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. Its evidence—the evidence of the sentience—was to be seen, he said (and I here started as he spoke), in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The

result was discoverable, he added, in that silent yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made *him* what I now saw him—what he was. Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none.

Our books—the books which, for years, had formed no small portion of the mental existence of the invalid—were, as might be supposed, in strict keeping with this character of phantasm. We pored together over such works as the *Vert-vert* and *Chartreuse* of Gresset; the *Belphegor* of Machiavelli; the *Heaven and Hell* of Swedenborg; *The Subterranean Travels of Nicholas Klimm*, by Holberg; the *Chiromancy* of Robert Fludd, of Jean D'Indaginé, and of De la Chambre; *The Journey into the Blue Distance* of Tieck; and *The City of the Sun* of Campanella. One favourite volume was a small octavo edition of the *Directorium Inquisitorium*, by the Dominican Eymeric de Gironne; and there were passages in Pomponius Mela, about the old African Satyrs and Egipans, over which Usher would sit dreaming for hours. His chief delight, however, was found in the perusal of an exceedingly rare and curious book in quarto Gothic—the manual of a forgotten church—the *Vigiliae Mortuorum secundum Chorum Ecclesiae Maguntinae*.

I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence upon the hypochondriac, when, one evening, having informed me abruptly that the Lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of preserving her corpse for a fortnight (previously to its final interment) in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The worldly reason, however, assigned for this singular proceeding was one which I did not feel at liberty to dispute. The brother had been led to his resolution (so he told me) by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of her medical men, and of the remote and exposed situation of the burial-ground of the family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon the staircase, on the day of my arrival at the house, I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as at best but a harmless, and by no means an unnatural, precaution.

At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the arrangements for the temporary entombment. The body having been encoffined, we two alone bore it to its rest. The vault in which we placed it (and which had been so long unopened that our torches, half smothered in its oppressive atmosphere, gave us little opportunity for investigation) was small, damp, and entirely without means of admission for light; lying, at great depth, immediately beneath that portion of the building in which was my own sleeping apartment. It had been used, apparently, in remote feudal times, for

the worst purposes of a donjonkeep, and, in latter days, as a place of deposit for powder, or some other highly combustible substance, as a portion of its floor, and the whole interior of a long archway through which we reached it, were carefully sheathed with copper. The door, of massive iron, had been, also, similarly protected. Its immense weight caused an unusually sharp grating sound, as it moved upon its hinges.

Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. Our glances, however, rested not long upon the dead—for we could not regard her unawed. The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and, having secured the door of iron, made our way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house.

And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed from chamber to chamber with hurried, unequal, and objectless step. The pallor of his countenance had assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue—but the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The more occasional huskiness of his tone was heard no more; and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterised his utterance. There were times, indeed, when I thought his unceasingly agitated mind was labouring with some oppressive secret, to divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness, for I beheld him gazing upon vacancy for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest attention, as if listening to some imaginary sound. It was no wonder that his condition terrified—that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions.

It was, especially, upon retiring to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after the placing of the Lady Madeline within the donjon, that I experienced the full power of such feelings. Sleep came not near my couch—while the hours waned and waned

away. I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavoured to believe that much if not all of what I felt was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room—of the dark and tattered draperies, which, tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed. But my efforts were fruitless. An irrepressible tremor gradually pervaded my frame; and, at length, there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm. Shaking this off with a gasp and a struggle, I uplifted myself upon the pillows, and, peering earnestly within the intense darkness of the chamber, hearkened—I know not why, except that an instinctive spirit prompted me—to certain low and indefinite sounds which came, through the pauses of the storm, at long intervals, I knew not whence. Overpowered by an intense sentiment of horror, unaccountable yet unendurable, I threw on my clothes with haste (for I felt that I should sleep no more during the night), and endeavoured to arouse myself from the pitiable condition into which I had fallen, by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment.

I had taken but few turns in this manner, when a light step on an adjoining staircase arrested my attention. I presently recognised it as that of Usher. In an instant afterward he rapped with a gentle touch at my door, and entered, bearing a lamp. His countenance was, as usual, cadaverously wan—but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes—an evidently restrained hysteria in his whole demeanour. His air appalled me—but anything was preferable to the solitude which I had so long endured, and I even welcomed his presence as a relief.

“And you have not seen it?” he said abruptly, after having stared about him for some moments in silence—“you have not then seen it?—but, stay! you shall.” Thus speaking, and having carefully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements, and threw it freely open to the storm.

The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a tempestuous yet sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty. A whirlwind had apparently collected its force in our vicinity; for there were frequent and violent alterations in the direction of the wind; and the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so low as to press upon the turrets of the house) did not prevent our perceiving the life-like velocity with which they flew careering from all points against each other, without passing away into the distance. I say that even their exceeding density did not prevent our perceiving this—yet we had no glimpse of the moon or stars—nor was there any flashing forth of the lightning. But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated

vapour, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion.

"You must not—you shall not behold this!" said I, shudderingly, to Usher, as I led him, with a gentle violence, from the window to a seat. "These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon—or it may be that they have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close this casement—the air is chilling and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of your favourite romances. I will read, and you shall listen—and so we will pass away this terrible night together."

The antique volume which I had taken up was the *Mad Trist* of Sir Launcelot Canning; but I had called it a favourite of Usher's more in sad jest than in earnest; for, in truth, there is little in its uncouth and unimaginative prolixity which could have had interest for the lofty and spiritual ideality of my friend. It was, however, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac might find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly which I should read. Could I have judged, indeed, by the wild overstrained air of vivacity with which he hearkened, or apparently hearkened, to the words of the tale, I might well have congratulated myself upon the success of my design.

I had arrived at that well-known portion of the story where Ethelred, the hero of the *Trist*, having sought in vain for peaceable admission into the dwelling of the hermit, proceeds to make good an entrance by force. Here, it will be remembered, the words of the narrative run thus:—

"And Ethelred, who was by nature of a doughty heart, and who was now mighty withal, on account of the powerfulness of the wine which he had drunken, waited no longer to hold parley with the hermit, who, in sooth, was of an obstinate and malicious turn, but, feeling the rain upon his shoulders, and fearing the rising of the tempest, uplifted his mace outright, and, with blows, made quickly room in the plankings of the door for his gauntleted hand; and now pulling therewith sturdily, he so cracked, and ripped, and tore all asunder, that the noise of the dry and hollow-sounding wood alarummed and reverberated throughout the forest."

At the termination of this sentence I started, and for a moment paused; for it appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me)—it appeared to me that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there came, indistinctly, to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of character, the

echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described. It was, beyond doubt, the coincidence alone which had arrested my attention ; for, amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the sound, in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or disturbed me. I continued the story :—

“ But the good champion Ethelred, now entering within the door, was sore enraged and amazed to perceive no signal of the malicious hermit ; but, in the stead thereof, a dragon of a scaly and prodigious demeanour, and of a fiery tongue, which sate in guard before a palace of gold, with a floor of silver ; and upon the wall there hung a shield of shining brass with this legend enwritten :—

Who entereth herein, a conqueror hath bin ;
Who slayeth the dragon, the shield he shall win.

And Ethelred uplifted his mace, and struck upon the head of the dragon, which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withal so piercing, that Ethelred had fain to close his ears with his hands against the dreadful noise of it, the like whereof was never before heard.”

Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement—for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound—the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon’s unnatural shriek as described by the romancer.

Oppressed as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of this second and most extraordinary coincidence, by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitive nervousness of my companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sound in question ; although, assuredly, a strange alteration had, during the last few minutes, taken place in his demeanour. From a position fronting my own, he had gradually brought round his chair, so as to sit with his face to the door of the chamber ; and thus I could but partially perceive his features, although I saw that his lips trembled as if he were murmuring inaudibly. His head had dropped upon his breast— I knew that he was not asleep, from the wide and rigid opening of the eye as I caught a glance of it in profile. The motion of his body, too, was at variance with this idea—for he rocked from side to side with a gentle yet constant and uniform sway. Having rapidly taken

notice of all this, I resumed the narrative of Sir Launcelot, which thus proceeded :—

“ And now, the champion, having escaped from the terrible fury of the dragon, bethinking himself of the brazen shield, and of the breaking up of the enchantment which was upon it, removed the carcass from out of the way before him, and approached valorously over the silver pavement of the castle to where the shield was upon the wall ; which in sooth tarried not for his full coming, but fell down at his feet upon the silver floor, with a mighty great and terrible ringing sound.”

No sooner had these syllables passed my lips, than—as if a shield of brass had indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver—I became aware of a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous, yet apparently muffled reverberation. Completely unnerved, I leaped to my feet ; but the measured rocking movement of Usher was undisturbed. I rushed to the chair in which he sat. His eyes were bent fixedly before him, and throughout his whole countenance there reigned a stony rigidity. But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over his whole person ; a sickly smile quivered on his lips ; and I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending closely over him, I at length drank in the hideous import of his words.

“ Not hear it ?—yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am !—I dared not—I *dared* not speak ! *We have put her living in the tomb !* Said I not that my senses were acute ? I *now* tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many, many days ago—yet I dared not—I *dared not speak !* And now—to-night—Ethelred—ha ! ha !—the breaking of the hermit’s door and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangour of the shield !—say, rather, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault ! Oh, whither shall I fly ? Will she not be here anon ? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste ? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair ? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart ? Madman ! ”—here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul—“ *Madman ! I tell you that she now stands without the door !* ”

As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell—the huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust—but then

without those doors there *did* stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the Lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. The storm was still abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued ; for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon, which now shone vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure, of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened—there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like a voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the “House of Usher.”

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM

Impia tortorum longas hic turba furores
Sanguinis innocui, non satiata, aluit.
Sospite nunc patria, fracto nunc funeris antro,
Mors ubi dira fuit vita salusque patent.

*[Quatrain composed for the gates of a market to be erected upon the site of the
Jacobin Club House at Paris.]*

I WAS sick—sick unto death with that long agony ; and when they at length unbound me, and I was permitted to sit, I felt that my senses were leaving me. The sentence—the dread sentence of death—was the last of distinct accentuation which reached my ears. After that, the sound of the Inquisitorial voices seemed merged in one dreamy indeterminate hum. It conveyed to my soul the idea of *revolution*—perhaps from its association in fancy with the burr of a mill-wheel. This only for a brief period ; for presently I heard no more. Yet, for a while, I saw ; but with how terrible an exaggeration ! I saw the lips of the black-robed judges. They appeared to me white—whiter than the sheet upon which I trace these words—and thin even to grotesqueness ; thin with the intensity of their expression of firmness—of immovable resolution—of stern contempt of human torture. I saw that the decrees of what to me was Fate were still issuing from those lips. I saw them writhe with a deadly locution. I saw them fashion the syllables of my name ; and I shuddered because no sound succeeded. I saw, too, for a few moments of delirious horror, the soft and nearly imperceptible waving of the sable draperies which enwrapped the walls of the apartment. And then my vision fell upon the seven tall candles upon the table. At first they wore the aspect of charity, and seemed white slender angels who would save me ; but then, all at once, there came a most deadly nausea over my spirit, and I felt every fibre in my frame thrill as if I had touched the wire of a galvanic battery, while the angel forms became meaningless spectres,

with heads of flame, and I saw that from them there would be no help. And then there stole into my fancy, like a rich musical note, the thought of what sweet rest there must be in the grave. The thought came gently and stealthily, and it seemed long before it attained full appreciation ; but just as my spirit came at length properly to feel and entertain it, the figures of the judges vanished, as if magically, from before me ; the tall candles sank into nothingness ; their flames went out utterly ; the blackness of darkness supervened ; all sensations appeared swallowed up in a mad rushing descent as of the soul into Hades. Then silence, and stillness, and night were the universe.

I had swooned ; but still will not say that all of consciousness was lost. What of it there remained I will not attempt to define, or even to describe ; yet all was not lost. In the deepest slumber—no ! In delirium—no ! In a swoon—no ! In death—no ! even in the grave all *is not* lost. Else there is no immortality for man. Arousing from the most profound of slumbers, we break the gossamer web of *some* dream. Yet in a second afterward (so frail may that web have been) we remember not that we have dreamed. In the return to life from the swoon there are two stages : first, that of the sense of mental or spiritual ; secondly, that of the sense of physical existence. It seems probable that if, upon reaching the second stage, we could recall the impressions of the first, we should find these impressions eloquent in memories of the gulf beyond. And that gulf is—what ? How at least shall we distinguish its shadows from those of the tomb ? But if the impressions of what I have termed the first stage are not, at will, recalled, yet, after long interval, do they not come unbidden, while we marvel whence they come ! He who has never swooned, is not he who finds strange palaces and wildly familiar faces in coals that glow ; is not he who beholds floating in mid-air the sad visions that the many may not view ; is not he who ponders over the perfume of some novel flower—is not he whose brain grows bewildered with the meaning of some musical cadence which has never before arrested his attention.

Amid frequent and thoughtful endeavours to remember ; amid earnest struggles to regather some token of the state of seeming nothingness into which my soul had lapsed, there have been moments when I have dreamed of success, there have been brief, very brief periods when I have conjured up remembrances which the lucid reason of a later epoch assures me could have had reference only to that condition of seeming unconsciousness. These shadows of memory tell, indistinctly, of tall figures that lifted and bore me in silence down—down—still down—till a hideous dizziness oppressed me at the mere idea of the interminableness of the descent. They tell also of a vague horror at my heart, on account of that heart's

unnatural stillness. Then comes a sense of sudden motionlessness throughout all things ; as if those who bore me (a ghastly train !) had outrun, in their descent, the limits of the limitless, and paused from the wearisomeness of their toil. After this I call to mind flatness and dampness ; and then all is *madness*—the madness of a memory which busies itself among forbidden things.

Very suddenly there came back to my soul motion and sound—the tumultuous motion of the heart, and, in my ears, the sound of its beating. Then a pause, in which all is blank. Then again sound, and motion, and touch—a tingling sensation pervading my frame. Then the mere consciousness of existence, without thought—a condition which lasted long. Then, very suddenly, *thought*, and shuddering terror, and earnest endeavour to comprehend my true state. Then a strong desire to lapse into insensibility. Then a rushing revival of soul and a successful effort to move. And now a full memory of the trial, of the judges, of the sable draperies, of the sentence, of the sickness, of the swoon. Then entire forgetfulness of all that followed ; of all that a later day and much earnestness of endeavour have enabled me vaguely to recall.

So far, I had not opened my eyes. I felt that I lay upon my back, unbound. I reached out my hand, and it fell heavily upon something damp and hard. There I suffered it to remain for many minutes, while I strove to imagine where and *what* I could be. I longed, yet dared not, to employ my vision. I dreaded the first glance at objects around me. It was not that I feared to look upon things horrible, but that I grew aghast lest there should be *nothing* to see. At length, with a wild desperation at heart, I quickly unclosed my eyes. My worst thoughts, then, were confirmed. The blackness of eternal night encompassed me. I struggled for breath. The intensity of the darkness seemed to oppress and stifle me. The atmosphere was intolerably close. I still lay quietly, and made effort to exercise my reason. I brought to mind the Inquisitorial proceedings, and attempted from that point to deduce my real condition. The sentence had passed ; and it appeared to me that a very long interval of time had since elapsed. Yet not for a moment did I suppose myself actually dead. Such a supposition, notwithstanding what we read in fiction, is altogether inconsistent with real existence—but where and in what state was I ? The condemned to death, I knew, perished usually at the *autos da fé*, and one of these had been held on the very night of the day of my trial. Had I been remanded to my dungeon, to await the next sacrifice, which would not take place for many months ? This I saw at once could not be. Victims had been in immediate demand. Moreover, my dungeon, as well as all the condemned cells at Toledo, had stone floors, and light was not altogether excluded.

A fearful idea now suddenly drove the blood in torrents upon my heart, and for a brief period I once more relapsed into insensibility. Upon recovering, I at once started to my feet, trembling convulsively in every fibre. I thrust my arms wildly above and around me in all directions. I felt nothing; yet dreaded to move a step, lest I should be impeded by the walls of a *tomb*. Perspiration burst from every pore, and stood in cold beads upon my forehead. The agony of suspense grew at length intolerable, and I cautiously moved forward, with my arms extended, and my eyes straining from their sockets, in the hope of catching some faint ray of light. I proceeded for many paces; but still all was blackness and vacancy. I breathed more freely. It seemed evident that mine was not, at least, the most hideous of fates.

And now, as I still continued to step cautiously onward, there came thronging upon my recollection a thousand vague rumours of the horrors of Toledo. Of the dungeons there had been strange things narrated—fables I had always deemed them—but yet strange, and too ghastly to repeat, save in a whisper. Was I left to perish of starvation in this subterranean world of darkness; or what fate, perhaps even more fearful, awaited me? That the result would be death, and a death of more than customary bitterness, I knew too well the character of my judges to doubt. The mode and the hour were all that occupied or distracted me.

My outstretched hands at length encountered some solid obstruction. It was a wall, seemingly of stone masonry—very smooth, slimy, and cold. I followed it up, stepping with all the careful distrust with which certain antique narratives had inspired me. This process, however, afforded me no means of ascertaining the dimensions of my dungeon, as I might make its circuit, and return to the point whence I set out, without being aware of the fact, so perfectly uniform seemed the wall. I therefore sought the knife which had been in my pocket, when led into the inquisitorial chamber, but it was gone; my clothes had been exchanged for a wrapper of coarse serge. I had thought of forcing the blade in some minute crevice of the masonry, so as to identify my point of departure. The difficulty, nevertheless, was but trivial; although, in the disorder of my fancy, it seemed at first insuperable. I tore a part of the hem from the robe and placed the fragment at full length, and at right angles to the wall. In grouping my way around the prison, I could not fail to encounter this rag upon completing the circuit. So, at least, I thought; but I had not counted upon the extent of the dungeon, or upon my own weakness. The ground was moist and slippery. I staggered onward for some time, when I stumbled and fell. My excessive fatigue induced me to remain prostrate; and sleep soon overtook me as I lay.

Upon awaking, and stretching forth an arm, I found beside me a loaf and a pitcher with water. I was too much exhausted to reflect upon this circumstance, but ate and drank with avidity. Shortly afterward I resumed my tour around the prison, and, with much toil, came at last upon the fragment of the serge. Up to the period when I fell, I had counted fifty-two paces, and, upon resuming my walk, I had counted forty-eight more—when I arrived at the rag. There were in all, then, a hundred paces; and, admitting two paces to the yard, I presumed the dungeon to be fifty yards in circuit. I had met, however, with many angles in the wall, and thus I could form no guess at the shape of the vault; for vault I could not help supposing it to be.

I had little object—certainly no hope—in these researches; but a vague curiosity prompted me to continue them. Quitting the wall, I resolved to cross the area of the enclosure. At first, I proceeded with extreme caution, for the floor, although seemingly of solid material, was treacherous with slime. At length, however, I took courage, and did not hesitate to step firmly—endeavouring to cross in as direct a line as possible. I had advanced some ten or twelve paces in this manner, when the remnant of the torn hem of my robe became entangled between my legs. I stepped on it, and fell violently on my face.

In the confusion attending my fall, I did not immediately apprehend a somewhat startling circumstance, which yet, in a few seconds afterward, and while I still lay prostrate, arrested my attention. It was this: my chin rested upon the floor of the prison, but my lips, and the upper portion of my head, although seemingly at a less elevation than the chin, touched nothing. At the same time, my forehead seemed bathed in a clammy vapour, and the peculiar smell of decayed fungus arose to my nostrils. I put forward my arm, and shuddered to find that I had fallen at the very brink of a circular pit, whose extent, of course, I had no means of ascertaining at the moment. Groping about the masonry just below the margin, I succeeded in dislodging a small fragment, and let it fall into the abyss. For many seconds I hearkened to its reverberations as it dashed against the sides of the chasm in its descent. At length, there was a sullen plunge into water, succeeded by loud echoes. At the same moment, there came a sound resembling the quick opening, and as rapid closing, of a door overhead, while a faint gleam of light flashed suddenly through the gloom, and as suddenly faded away.

I saw clearly the doom which had been prepared for me, and congratulated myself upon the timely accident by which I had escaped. Another step before my fall, and the world had seen me no more. And the death just avoided was of that very

character which I had regarded as fabulous and frivolous in the tales respecting the Inquisition. To the victims of its tyranny, there was the choice of death with its direst physical agonies, or death with its most hideous moral horrors. I had been reserved for the latter. By long suffering my nerves had been unstrung, until I trembled at the sound of my own voice, and had become in every respect a fitting subject for the species of torture which awaited me.

Shaking in every limb, I groped my way back to the wall—resolving there to perish rather than risk the terrors of the well, of which my imagination now pictured many in various positions about the dungeon. In other conditions of mind, I might have had courage to end my misery at once, by a plunge into one of these abysses ; but now I was the veriest of cowards. Neither could I forget what I had read of these pits—that the *sudden* extinction of life formed no part of their most horrible plan.

Agitation of spirit kept me awake for many long hours ; but at length I again slumbered. Upon arousing, I found by my side, as before, a loaf and a pitcher of water. A burning thirst consumed me, and I emptied the vessel at a draught. It must have been drugged—for scarcely had I drunk, before I became irresistibly drowsy. A deep sleep fell upon me—a sleep like that of death. How long it lasted, of course, I know not ; but when, once again, I unclosed my eyes, the objects around me were visible. By a wild, sulphurous lustre, the origin of which I could not at first determine, I was enabled to see the extent and aspect of the prison.

In its size I had been greatly mistaken. The whole circuit of its walls did not exceed twenty-five yards. For some minutes this fact occasioned me a world of vain trouble ; vain indeed—for what could be of less importance, under the terrible circumstances which environed me, than the mere dimensions of my dungeon ? But my soul took a wild interest in trifles, and I busied myself in endeavours to account for the error I had committed in my measurement. The truth at length flashed upon me. In my first attempt at exploration I had counted fifty-two paces, up to the period when I fell ; I must then have been within a pace or two of the fragment of serge ; in fact, I had nearly performed the circuit of the vault. I then slept—and, upon awaking, I must have returned upon my steps—thus supposing the circuit nearly double what it actually was. My confusion of mind prevented me from observing that I began my tour with the wall to the left, and ended it with the wall to the right.

I had been deceived, too, in respect to the shape of the enclosure. In feeling my way, I had found many angles, and thus deduced an idea of great irregularity ; so potent is the effect of total darkness

upon one arousing from lethargy or sleep ! The angles were simply those of a few slight depressions, or niches, at odd intervals. The general shape of the prison was square. What I had taken for masonry seemed now to be iron, or some other metal, in huge plates, whose sutures or joints occasioned the depression. The entire surface of this metallic enclosure was rudely daubed in all the hideous and repulsive devices to which the charnel superstition of the monks has given rise. The figures of fiends in aspects of menace, with skeleton forms, and other more really fearful images, overspread and disfigured the walls. I observed that the outlines of these monstrosities were sufficiently distinct, but that the colours seemed faded and blurred, as if from the effects of a damp atmosphere. I now noticed the floor, too, which was of stone. In the centre yawned the circular pit from whose jaws I had escaped ; but it was the only one in the dungeon.

All this I saw indistinctly and by much effort—for my personal condition had been greatly changed during slumber. I now lay upon my back, and at full length, on a species of low framework of wood. To this I was securely bound by a long strap resembling a surcingle. It passed in many convolutions about my limbs and body, leaving at liberty only my head and my left arm to such extent that I could, by dint of much exertion, supply myself with food from an earthen dish which lay by my side on the floor. I saw, to my horror, that the pitcher had been removed. I say, to my horror—for I was consumed with intolerable thirst. This thirst it appeared to be the design of my persecutors to stimulate—for the food in the dish was meat pungently seasoned.

Looking upward, I surveyed the ceiling of my prison. It was some thirty or forty feet overhead, and constructed much as the side walls. In one of its panels a very singular figure riveted my whole attention. It was the painted figure of Time as he is commonly represented, save that, in lieu of a scythe, he held what, at a casual glance, I supposed to be the pictured image of a huge pendulum, such as we see on antique clocks. There was something, however, in the appearance of this machine which caused me to regard it more attentively. While I gazed directly upward at it (for its position was immediately over my own), I fancied that I saw in it motion. In an instant afterward the fancy was confirmed. Its sweep was brief, and, of course, slow. I watched it for some minutes, somewhat in fear, but more in wonder. Wearied at length with observing its dull movement, I turned my eyes upon the other objects in the cell.

A slight noise attracted my notice, and looking to the floor, I saw several enormous rats traversing it. They had issued from the well, which lay just within view to my right. Even then, while I gazed,

they came up in troops, hurriedly, with ravenous eyes, allured by the scent of the meat. From this it required much effort and attention to scare them away.

It might have been half an hour, perhaps even an hour (for I could take but imperfect note of time) before I again cast my eyes upward. What I then saw, confounded and amazed me. The sweep of the pendulum had increased in extent by nearly a yard. As a natural consequence, its velocity was also much greater. But what mainly disturbed me, was the idea that it had perceptibly *descended*. I now observed—with what horror it is needless to say—that its nether extremity was formed of a crescent of glittering steel, about a foot in length from horn to horn; the horns upward, and the under edge evidently as keen as that of a razor. Like a razor also, it seemed massy and heavy, tapering from the edge into a solid and broad structure above. It was appended to a weighty rod of brass, and the whole *hissed* as it swung through the air.

I could no longer doubt the doom prepared for me by monkish ingenuity in torture. My cognisance of the pit had become known to the inquisitorial agents—the *pit* whose horrors had been destined for so bold a recusant as myself—the *pit*, typical of hell, and regarded by rumour as the Ultima Thule of all their punishments. The plunge into this pit I had avoided by the merest of accidents, and I knew that surprise, or entrapment into torment, formed an important portion of all the grotesquerie of these dungeon deaths. Having failed to fall, it was no part of the demon plan to hurl me into the abyss; and thus (there being no alternative) a different and a milder destruction awaited me. Milder! I half smiled in my agony as I thought of such application of such a term.

What boots it to tell of the long, long hours of horror more than mortal, during which I counted the rushing oscillations of the steel! Inch by inch—line by line—with a descent only appreciable at intervals that seemed ages—down and still down it came! Days passed—it might have been that many days passed—ere it swept so closely over me as to fan me with its acrid breath. The odour of the sharp steel forced itself into my nostrils. I prayed—I wearied heaven with my prayer for its more speedy descent. I grew frantically mad, and struggled to force myself upward against the sweep of the fearful scimitar. And then I fell suddenly calm, and lay smiling at the glittering death, as a child at some rare bauble.

There was another interval of utter insensibility; it was brief; for, upon again lapsing into life, there had been no perceptible descent in the pendulum. But it might have been long—for I knew there were demons who took note of my swoon, and who could have arrested the vibration at pleasure. Upon my recovery, too, I felt very—oh, inexpressibly—sick and weak, as if through long

inanimation. Even amid the agonies of that period the human nature craved food. With painful effort I outstretched my left arm as far as my bonds permitted, and took possession of the small remnant which had been spared me by the rats. As I put a portion of it within my lips, there rushed to my mind a half-formed thought of joy—of hope. Yet what business had I with hope? It was, as I say, a half-formed thought—man has many such, which are never completed. I felt that it was of joy—of hope; but I felt also that it had perished in its formation. In vain I struggled to perfect—to regain it. Long suffering had nearly annihilated all my ordinary powers of mind. I was an imbecile—an idiot.

The vibration of the pendulum was at right angles to my length. I saw that the crescent was designed to cross the region of the heart. It would fray the serge of my robe—it would return and repeat its operations—again—and again. Notwithstanding its terrifically wide sweep (some thirty feet or more), and the hissing vigour of its descent, sufficient to sunder these very walls of iron, still the fraying of my robe would be all that, for several minutes, it would accomplish. And at this thought I paused. I dared not go farther than this reflection. I dwelt upon it with a pertinacity of attention—as if, in so dwelling, I could arrest *here* the descent of the steel. I forced myself to ponder upon the sound of the crescent as it should pass across the garment—upon the peculiar thrilling sensation which the friction of cloth produces on the nerves. I pondered upon all this frivolity until my teeth were on edge.

Down—steadily down it crept. I took a frenzied pleasure in contrasting its downward with its lateral velocity. To the right—to the left—far and wide—with the shriek of a damned spirit! to my heart, with the stealthy pace of the tiger! I alternately laughed and howled, as the one or the other idea grew predominant.

Down—certainly, relentlessly down! It vibrated within three inches of my bosom! I struggled violently—furiously—to free my left arm. This was free only from the elbow to the hand. I could reach the latter, from the platter beside me, to my mouth, with great effort, but no farther. Could I have broken the fastenings above the elbow, I would have seized and attempted to arrest the pendulum. I might as well have attempted to arrest an avalanche!

Down—still unceasingly—still inevitably down! I gasped and struggled at each vibration. I shrunk convulsively at its every sweep. My eyes followed its outward or upward whirls with the eagerness of the most unmeaning despair; they closed themselves spasmodically at the descent, although death would have been a relief, oh, how unspeakable! Still I quivered in every nerve to think how slight a sinking of the machinery would precipitate that keen, glistening axe upon my bosom. It was *hope* that prompted

the nerve to quiver—the frame to shrink. It was *hope*—the hope that triumphs on the rack—that whispers to the death-condemned even in the dungeons of the Inquisition.

I saw that some ten or twelve vibrations would bring the steel in actual contact with my robe—and with this observation there suddenly came over my spirit all the keen, collected calmness of despair. For the first time during many hours—or perhaps days—I *thought*. It now occurred to me that the bandage, or surcingle, which enveloped me, was *unique*. I was tied by no separate cord. The first stroke of the razor-like crescent athwart any portion of the band would so detach it that it might be unwound from my person by means of my left hand. But how fearful, in that case, the proximity of the steel! The result of the slightest struggle, how deadly! Was it likely, moreover, that the minions of the torturer had not foreseen and provided for this possibility? Was it probable that the bandage crossed my bosom in the track of the pendulum? Dreading to find my faint, and, as it seemed, my last hope frustrated, I so far elevated my head as to obtain a distinct view of my breast. The surcingle enveloped my limbs and body close in all directions—*save in the path of the destroying crescent*.

Scarcely had I dropped my head back into its original position, when there flashed upon my mind what I cannot better describe than as the unformed half of that idea of deliverance to which I have previously alluded, and of which a moiety only floated indeterminately through my brain when I raised food to my burning lips. The whole thought was now present—feeble, scarcely sane, scarcely definite—but still entire. I proceeded at once, with the nervous energy of despair, to attempt its execution.

For many hours the immediate vicinity of the low framework upon which I lay, had been literally swarming with rats. They were wild, bold, ravenous—their red eyes glaring upon me as if they waited but for motionlessness on my part to make me their prey. “To what food,” I thought, “have they been accustomed in the well?”

They had devoured, in spite of all my efforts to prevent them, all but a small remnant of the contents of the dish. I had fallen into an habitual see-saw, or wave of the hand, about the platter; and at length the unconscious uniformity of the movement deprived it of effect. In their voracity, the vermin frequently fastened their sharp fangs in my fingers. With the particles of the oily and spicy viand which now remained, I thoroughly rubbed the bandage wherever I could reach it; then, raising my hand from the floor, I lay breathlessly still.

At first, the ravenous animals were startled and terrified at the change—at the cessation of movement. They shrank alarmedly

back ; many sought the well. But this was only for a moment. I had not counted in vain upon their voracity. Observing that I remained without motion, one or two of the boldest leaped upon the framework, and smelt at the surcingle. This seemed the signal for a general rush. Forth from the well they hurried in fresh troops. They clung to the wood—they overran it, and leaped in hundreds upon my person. The measured movement of the pendulum disturbed them not at all. Avoiding its strokes, they busied themselves with the anointed bandage. They pressed—they swarmed upon me in ever accumulating heaps. They writhed upon my throat ; their cold lips sought my own ; I was half stifled by their thronging pressure ; disgust, for which the world has no name, swelled my bosom, and chilled, with a heavy clamminess, my heart. Yet one minute, and I felt that the struggle would be over. Plainly I perceived the loosening of the bandage. I knew that in more than one place it must be already severed. With a more than human resolution I lay still.

Nor had I erred in my calculations—nor had I endured in vain. I at length felt that I was *free*. The surcingle hung in ribands from my body. But the stroke of the pendulum already pressed upon my bosom. It had divided the serge of the robe. It had cut through the linen beneath. Twice again it swung, and a sharp sense of pain shot through every nerve. But the moment of escape had arrived. At a wave of my hand my deliverers hurried tumultuously away. With a steady movement—cautious, sidelong, shrinking, and slow—I slid from the embrace of the bandage and beyond the reach of the scimitar. For the moment, at least, *I was free*.

Free!—and in the grasp of the Inquisition ! I had scarcely stepped from my wooden bed of horror upon the stone floor of the prison, when the motion of the hellish machine ceased, and I beheld it drawn up, by some invisible force, through the ceiling. This was a lesson which I took desperately to heart. My every motion was undoubtedly watched. Free!—I had but escaped death in one form of agony, to be delivered unto worse than death in some other. With that thought I rolled my eyes nervously around on the barriers of iron that hemmed me in. Something unusual—some change which, at first, I could not appreciate distinctly—it was obvious, had taken place in the apartment. For many minutes of a dreamy and trembling abstraction, I busied myself in vain, unconnected conjecture. During this period, I became aware, for the first time, of the origin of the sulphurous light which illumined the cell. It proceeded from a fissure, about half an inch in width, extending entirely around the prison at the base of the walls, which thus appeared, and were, completely separated from the

floor. I endeavoured, but of course in vain, to look through the aperture.

As I arose from the attempt, the mystery of the alteration in the chamber broke at once upon my understanding. I have observed that, although the outlines of the figures upon the walls were sufficiently distinct, yet the colours seemed blurred and indefinite. These colours had now assumed, and were momentarily assuming, a startling and most intense brilliancy, that gave to the spectral and fiendish portraiture an aspect that might have thrilled even firmer nerves than my own. Demon eyes, of a wild and ghastly vivacity, glared upon me in a thousand directions, where none has been visible before, and gleamed with the lurid lustre of a fire that I could not force my imagination to regard as unreal.

Unreal! Even while I breathed there came to my nostrils the breath of the vapour of heated iron! A suffocating odour pervaded the prison! A deeper glow settled each moment in the eyes that glared at my agonies! A richer tint of crimson diffused itself over the pictured horrors of blood. I panted! I gasped for breath! There could be no doubt of the design of my tormentors—oh! most unrelenting! oh! most demoniac of men! I shrank from the glowing metal to the centre of the cell. Amid the thought of the fiery destruction that impended, the idea of the coolness of the well came over my soul like balm. I rushed to its deadly brink. I threw my straining vision below. The glare from the enkindled roof illumined its inmost recesses. Yet, for a wild moment, did my spirit refuse to comprehend the meaning of what I saw. At length it forced—it wrestled its way into my soul—it burned itself in upon my shuddering reason. Oh! for a voice to speak!—oh! horror!—oh! any horror but this! With a shriek, I rushed from the margin, and buried my face in my hands—weeping bitterly.

The heat rapidly increased, and once again I looked up, shuddering as with a fit of the ague. There had been a second change in the cell—and now the change was obviously in the *form*. As before, it was in vain that I at first endeavoured to appreciate or understand what was taking place. But not long was I left in doubt. The Inquisitorial vengeance had been hurried by my twofold escape, and there was to be no more dallying with the King of Terrors. The room had been square. I saw that two of its iron angles were now acute—two, consequently, obtuse. The fearful difference quickly increased with a low rumbling or moaning sound. In an instant the apartment had shifted its form into that of a lozenge. But the alteration stopped not here—I neither hoped nor desired it to stop. I could have clasped the red walls to my bosom as a garment of eternal peace. “Death,” I said, “any death but that of the pit!” Fool! might I not have known that *into the pit*

it was the object of the burning iron to urge me? Could I resist its glow? or, if even that, could I withstand its pressure? And now, flatter and flatter grew the lozenge, with a rapidity that left me no time for contemplation. Its centre, and of course, its greatest width, came just over the yawning gulf. I shrank back—but the closing walls pressed me resistlessly onward. At length for my seared and writhing body there was no longer an inch of foothold on the firm floor of the prison. I struggled no more, but the agony of my soul found vent in one loud, long, and final scream of despair. I felt that I tottered upon the brink—I averted my eyes——

There was a discordant hum of human voices! There was a loud blast as of many trumpets! There was a harsh grating as of a thousand thunders! The fiery walls rushed back! An outstretched arm caught my own as I fell, fainting, into the abyss. It was that of General Lasalle. The French army had entered Toledo. The Inquisition was in the hands of its enemies.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE BLACK CAT

FOR the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not—and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburden my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified—have tortured—have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. To me, they have presented little but horror—to many they will seem less terrible than *baroques*. Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the commonplace—some intellect more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which will perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects.

From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my companions. I was especially fond of animals, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most of my time, and never was so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This peculiarity of character grew with my growth, and, in my manhood, I derived from it one of my principal sources of pleasure. To those who have cherished an affection for a faithful and sagacious dog, I need hardly be at the trouble of explaining the nature or the intensity of the gratification thus derivable. There is something in the unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the heart of him who has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of mere *Man*.

I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own. Observing my partiality for domestic pets, she lost no opportunity of procuring those of the

most agreeable kind. We had birds, gold-fish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey and a *cat*.

This latter was a remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astonishing degree. In speaking of his intelligence, my wife, who at heart was not a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise. Not that she was ever *serious* upon this point—and I mention the matter at all for no better reason than that it happens, just now, to be remembered.

Pluto—this was the cat's name—was my favourite pet and playmate. I alone fed him, and he attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets.

Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during which my general temperament and character—through the instrumentality of the fiend Intemperance—had (I blush to confess it) experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence. My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected, but ill-used them. For Pluto, however, I still retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating him, as I made no scruple of maltreating the rabbits, the monkey, or even the dog, when by accident, or through affection, they came in my way. But my disease grew upon me—for what disease is like alcohol?—and at length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish—even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper.

One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about town, I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body: and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. I took from my waistcoat pocket a pen-knife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.

When reason returned with the morning—when I had slept off the fumes of the night's debauch—I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty; but it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul

remained untouched. I again plunged into excess, and soon drowned in wine all memory of the deed.

In the meantime the cat slowly recovered. The socket of the lost eye presented, it is true, a frightful appearance, but he no longer appeared to suffer any pain. He went about the house as usual, but, as might be expected, fled in extreme terror at my approach. I had so much of my old heart left, as to be at first grieved by this evident dislike on the part of a creature which had once so loved me. But this feeling soon gave place to irritation. And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS. Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart—one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should *not*? Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is *Law*, merely because we understand it to be such? This spirit of perverseness, I say, came to my final overthrow. It was this unfathomable longing of the soul *to vex itself*—to offer violence to its own nature—to do wrong for the wrong's sake only—that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute. One morning, in cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree—hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart—hung it *because* I knew that it had loved me, and *because* I felt it had given me no reason of offence—hung it *because* I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin—a deadly sin that would so jeopardise my immortal soul as to place it—if such a thing were possible—even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God.

On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I was aroused from sleep by the cry of "Fire!" The curtains of my bed were in flames. The whole house was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant, and myself, made our escape from the conflagration. The destruction was complete. My entire worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to despair.

I am above the weakness of seeking to establish a sequence of cause and effect between the disaster and the atrocity. But I am detailing a chain of facts, and wish not to leave even a possible link imperfect. On the day succeeding the fire, I visited the ruins. The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very thick, which stood about

the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. The plastering had here, in great measure, resisted the action of the fire—a fact which I attributed to it having been recently spread. About this wall a dense crowd were collected, and many persons seemed to be examining a particular portion of it with very minute and eager attention. The words “strange!” “singular!” and other similar expressions, excited my curiosity. I approached and saw, as if graven in bas-relief upon the white surface, the figure of a gigantic *cat*. The impression was given with an accuracy truly marvellous. There was a rope about the animal’s neck.

When I first beheld this apparition—for I could scarcely regard it as less—my wonder and my terror were extreme. But at length reflection came to my aid. The cat, I remembered, had been hung in a garden adjacent to the house. Upon the alarm of fire, this garden had been immediately filled by the crowd—by some one of whom the animal must have been cut from the tree and thrown, through an open window, into my chamber. This had probably been done with the view of arousing me from sleep. The falling of other walls had compressed the victim of my cruelty into the substance of the freshly-spread plaster; the lime of which, with the flames and the *ammonia* from the carcass, had then accomplished the portraiture as I saw it.

Although I thus readily accounted to my reason, if not altogether to my conscience, for the startling fact just detailed, it did not the less fail to make a deep impression upon my fancy. For months I could not rid myself of the phantasm of the cat; and, during this period, there came back into my spirit a half-sentiment that seemed, but was not, remorse. I went so far as to regret the loss of the animal, and to look about me, among the vile haunts which I now habitually frequented, for another pet of the same species, and of somewhat similar appearance, with which to supply its place.

One night, as I sat, half stupefied, in a den of more than infamy, my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object, reposing upon the head of one of the immense hogsheads of gin, or of rum, which constituted the chief furniture of the apartment. I had been looking steadily at the top of this hogshead for some minutes, and what now caused me surprise was the fact that I had not sooner perceived the object thereupon. I approached it, and touched it with my hand. It was a black cat—a very large one—fully as large as Pluto, and closely resembling him in every respect but one. Pluto had not a white hair upon any portion of his body; but this cat had a large, although indefinite, splotch of white, covering nearly the whole region of the breast.

Upon my touching him, he immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand, and appeared delighted with my notice. This, then, was the very creature of which I was in search. I at once offered to purchase it of the landlord; but this person made no claim to it—knew nothing of it—had never seen it before.

I continued my caresses, and when I prepared to go home, the animal evinced a disposition to accompany me. I permitted it to do so, occasionally stooping and patting it as I proceeded. When it reached the house it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favourite with my wife.

For my own part, I soon found a dislike to it arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated; but—I know not how or why it was—its evident fondness for myself rather disgusted and annoyed me. By slow degrees, these feelings of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred. I avoided the creature; a certain sense of shame, and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, preventing me from physically abusing it. I did not, for some weeks, strike, or otherwise violently ill-use it; but gradually—very gradually—I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing, and to flee silently from its odious presence, as from the breath of a pestilence.

What added, no doubt, to my hatred of the beast, was the discovery, on the morning after I brought it home, that, like Pluto, it also had been deprived of one of its eyes. This circumstance, however, only endeared it to my wife, who, as I have already said, possessed, in a high degree, that humanity of feeling which had once been my distinguishing trait, and the source of many of my simplest and purest pleasures.

With my aversion to this cat, however, its partiality for myself seemed to increase. It followed my footsteps with a pertinacity which it would be difficult to make the reader comprehend. Whenever I sat, it would crouch beneath my chair, or spring upon my knees, covering me with its loathsome caresses. If I arose to walk, it would get between my feet, and thus nearly throw me down, or, fastening its long and sharp claws in my dress, clamber, in this manner, to my breast. At such times, although I longed to destroy it with a blow, I was yet withheld from so doing, partly by a memory of my former crime, but chiefly—let me confess it at once—by absolute *dread* of the beast.

This dread was not exactly a dread of physical evil—and yet I should be at a loss how otherwise to define it. I am almost ashamed to own—yes, even in this felon's cell, I am almost ashamed to own—that the terror and horror with which the animal inspired me, had been heightened by one of the merest chimeras it would be

possible to conceive. My wife had called my attention, more than once, to the character of the mark of white hair, of which I have spoken, and which constituted the sole visible difference between the strange beast and the one I had destroyed. The reader will remember that this mark, although large, had been originally very indefinite; but, by slow degrees—degrees nearly imperceptible, and which for a long time my reason struggled to reject as fanciful—it had, at length, assumed a rigorous distinctness of outline. It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to name—and for this, above all, I loathed, and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster *had I dared*—it was now, I say, the image of a hideous—of a ghastly thing—of the GALLOWES!—oh, mournful and terrible engine of horror and of crime—of agony and of death!

And now was I indeed wretched beyond the wretchedness of mere humanity. And *a brute beast*—whose fellow I had contemptuously destroyed—*a brute beast* to work out for *me*—for me, a man, fashioned in the image of the High God—so much of insufferable woe! Alas! neither by day nor by night knew I the blessing of rest any more! During the former the creature left me no moment alone; and, in the latter, I started, hourly, from dreams of unutterable fear, to find the hot breath of *the thing* upon my face, and its vast weight—an incarnate nightmare that I had no power to shake off—incumbent eternally upon my *heart*!

Beneath the pressure of torments such as these, the feeble remnant of the good within me succumbed. Evil thoughts became my sole intimates—the darkest and most evil of thoughts. The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of all things and of all mankind; while, from the sudden, frequent, and ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my uncomplaining wife, alas! was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers.

One day she accompanied me, upon some household errand, into the cellar of the old building which our poverty compelled us to inhabit. The cat followed me down the steep stairs, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting in, my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp, and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan.

This hideous murder accomplished, I set myself forthwith, and with entire deliberation, to the task of concealing the body. I knew

that I could not remove it from the house, either by day or by night, without the risk of being observed by the neighbours. Many projects entered my mind. At one period I thought of cutting the corpse into minute fragments, and destroying them by fire. At another, I resolved to dig a grave for it in the floor of the cellar. Again, I deliberated about casting it into the well in the yard—about packing it in a box, as if merchandise, with the usual arrangements, and so getting a porter to take it from the house. Finally I hit upon what I considered a far better expedient than either of these. I determined to wall it up in the cellar—as the monks of the Middle Ages are recorded to have walled up their victims.

For a purpose such as this the cellar was well adapted. Its walls were loosely constructed, and had lately been plastered throughout with a rough plaster, which the dampness of the atmosphere had prevented from hardening. Moreover, in one of the walls was a projection, caused by a false chimney, or fireplace, that had been filled up, and made to resemble the rest of the cellar. I made no doubt that I could readily displace the bricks at this point, insert the corpse, and wall the whole up as before, so that no eye could detect anything suspicious.

And in this calculation I was not deceived. By means of a crowbar I easily dislodged the bricks, and, having carefully deposited the body against the inner wall, I propped it in that position, while, with little trouble, I relaid the whole structure as it originally stood. Having procured mortar, sand, and hair, with every possible precaution, I prepared a plaster which could not be distinguished from the old, and with this I very carefully went over the new brickwork. When I had finished, I felt satisfied that all was right. The wall did not present the slightest appearance of having been disturbed. The rubbish on the floor was picked up with the minutest care. I looked around triumphantly, and said to myself, "Here, at least, then, my labour has not been in vain."

My next step was to look for the beast which had been the cause of so much wretchedness; for I had, at length, firmly resolved to put it to death. Had I been able to meet with it, at the moment, there could have been no doubt of its fate; but it appeared that the crafty animal had been alarmed at the violence of my previous anger, and forbore to present itself in my present mood. It is impossible to describe, or to imagine, the deep, the blissful sense of relief which the absence of the detested creature occasioned in my bosom. It did not make its appearance during the night—and thus for one night at least, since its introduction into the house, I soundly and tranquilly slept; aye, *slept* even with the burden of murder upon my soul!

The second and the third day passed, and still my tormentor came not. Once again I breathed as a free man. The monster, in terror, had fled the premises for ever! I should behold it no more! My happiness was supreme! The guilt of my dark deed disturbed me but little. Some few inquiries had been made, but these had been readily answered. Even a search had been instituted—but of course nothing was to be discovered. I looked upon my future felicity as secured.

Upon the fourth day of the assassination, a party of the police came, very unexpectedly, into the house, and proceeded again to make rigorous investigation of the premises. Secure, however, in the inscrutability of my place of concealment, I felt no embarrassment whatever. The officers bade me accompany them in their search. They left no nook or corner unexplored. At length, for the third or fourth time, they descended into the cellar. I quivered not in a muscle. My heart beat calmly as that of one who slumbers in innocence. I walked the cellar from end to end. I folded my arms upon my bosom, and roamed easily to and fro. The police were thoroughly satisfied, and prepared to depart. The glee at my heart was too strong to be restrained. I burned to say if but one word, by way of triumph, and to render doubly sure their assurance of my guiltlessness.

"Gentlemen," I said at last, as the party ascended the steps, "I delight to have allayed your suspicions. I wish you all health, and a little more courtesy. By the by, gentlemen, this—this is a very well-constructed house." (In the rabid desire to say something easily, I scarcely knew what I uttered at all.) "I may say an *excellently* well-constructed house. These walls—are you going, gentlemen?—these walls are solidly put together"; and here, through the mere frenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily, with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brickwork behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.

But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs of the Arch-Fiend! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence, than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb!—by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelled into one long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman—a howl—a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation.

Of my own thoughts it is folly to speak. Swooning, I staggered to the opposite wall. For one instant the party upon the stairs remained motionless, through extremity of terror and of awe. In the next, a dozen stout arms were toiling at the wall. It fell bodily.

The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb!

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

THE "Red Death" had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal—the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body, and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest ban which shut him out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men; and the whole seizure, progress, and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half an hour.

But the Prince Prospero was happy and dauntless and sagacious. When his dominions were half-depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his Court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys. This was an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's own eccentric yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had gates of iron. The courtiers, having entered, brought furnaces and massy hammers and welded the bolts. They resolved to leave means neither of ingress nor egress to the sudden impulses of despair from without or of frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned. With such precautions the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The external world could take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve or to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the "Red Death."

It was toward the close of the fifth or sixth month of his seclusion, and while the pestilence raged most furiously abroad, that the Prince Prospero entertained his thousand friends at a masked ball of the most unusual magnificence.

It was a voluptuous scene, that masquerade. But first let me tell of the rooms in which it was held. There were seven—an imperial suite. In many palaces, however, such suites form a long and straight vista, while the folding doors slide back nearly to the walls on either hand, so that the view of the whole extent is scarcely impeded. Here the case was very different, as might have been expected from the duke's love of the *bizarre*. The apartments were so irregularly disposed that the vision embraced but little more than one at a time. There was a sharp turn at every twenty or thirty yards, and at each turn a novel effect. To the right and left, in the middle of each wall, a tall and narrow Gothic window looked out upon a closed corridor which pursued the windings of the suite. These windows were of stained glass whose colour varied in accordance with the prevailing hue of the decorations of the chamber into which it opened. That at the eastern extremity was hung, for example, in blue, and vividly blue were its windows. The second chamber was purple in its ornaments and tapestries, and here the panes were purple. The third was green throughout, and so were the casements. The fourth was furnished and lighted with orange, the fifth with white, the sixth with violet. The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue. But in this chamber only the colour of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet—a deep blood-colour. Now in no one of the seven apartments was there any lamp or candelabrum amid the profusion of golden ornaments that lay scattered to and fro or depended from the roof. There was no light of any kind emanating from lamp or candle within the suite of chambers; but in the corridors that followed the suite there stood opposite to each window a heavy tripod bearing a brazier of fire that projected its rays through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumined the room. And thus were produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances. But in the western or black chamber the effect of the firelight that streamed upon the dark hangings, through the blood-tinted panes, was ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all.

It was in this apartment also that there stood against the western wall a gigantic clock of ebony. Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang; and when the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud, and deep, and exceedingly musical, but of so peculiar a

note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians of the orchestra were constrained to pause momentarily in their performance to hearken to the sound ; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions, and there was a brief disconcert of the whole gay company, and while the chimes of the clock yet rang it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation ; but when the echoes had fully ceased a light laughter at once pervaded the assembly ; the musicians looked at each other and smiled as if at their own nervousness and folly, and made whispering vows each to the other that the next chiming of the clock should produce in them no similar emotion, and then, after the lapse of sixty minutes (which embrace three thousand and six hundred seconds of the time that flies), there came yet another chiming of the clock, and then were the same disconcert and tremulousness and meditation as before.

But in spite of these things it was a gay and magnificent revel. The tastes of the duke were peculiar. He had a fine eye for colours and effects. He disregarded the *decora* of mere fashion. His plans were bold and fiery, and his conceptions glowed with barbaric lustre. There are some who would have thought him mad. His followers felt that he was not. It was necessary to hear, and see, and touch him to be *sure* that he was not.

He had directed, in great part, the movable embellishments of the seven chambers, upon occasion of this great *fête* ; and it was his own guiding taste which had given character to the masqueraders. Be sure they were grotesque. There were much glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm—much of what has been since seen in *Hernani*. There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the *bizarre*, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these—the dreams—writhed in and about, taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And, anon, there strikes the ebony clock which stands in the hall of the velvet ; and then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand. But the echoes of the chime die away—they have endured but an instant—and a light, half-subdued laughter floats after them as they depart. And now again the music swells, and the dreams live, and writhe to and fro more merrily than ever, taking hue from the many tinted windows through which stream the rays from the tripods. But to the

chamber which lies most eastwardly of the seven, there are now none of the maskers who venture ; for the night is waning away ; and there flows a ruddier light through the blood-coloured panes ; and the blackness of the sable drapery appals ; and to him whose foot falls upon the sable carpet, there comes from the near clock of ebony a muffled peal more solemnly emphatic than any which reaches *their* ears who indulge in the more remote gaieties of the other apartments.

But these other apartments were densely crowded, and in them beat feverishly the heart of life. And the revel went whirlingly on, until at length there commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock. And then the music ceased, as I have told ; and the evolutions of the waltzers were quieted ; and there was an uneasy cessation of all things as before. But now there were twelve strokes to be sounded by the bell of the clock ; and thus it happened, perhaps, that more of thought crept, with more of time, into the meditations of the thoughtful among those who revelled. And thus, too, it happened, perhaps, that before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before. And the rumour of this new presence having spread itself whisperingly around, there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, expressive of disapprobation and surprise—then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust.

In an assembly of phantasms such as I have painted, it may well be supposed that no ordinary appearance could have excited such sensation. In truth the masquerade licence of the night was nearly unlimited ; but the figure in question had out-Heroded Herod, and gone beyond the bounds of even the prince's indefinite decorum. There are chords in the hearts of the most reckless which cannot be touched without emotion. Even with the utterly lost, to whom life and death are equally jests, there are matters of which no jest can be made. The whole company indeed seemed now deeply to feel that in the costume and bearing of the stranger neither wit nor propriety existed. The figure was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. And yet all this might have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revellers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in *blood*—and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror.

When the eyes of Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its rôle, stalked to and fro among the waltzers) he was seen to be convulsed in the first moment with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste; but in the next his brow reddened with rage.

"Who dares?" he demanded hoarsely of the courtiers who stood near him—"who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him, that we may know whom we have to hang at sunrise from the battlements!"

It was in the eastern or blue chamber in which stood the Prince Prospero as he uttered these words. They rang throughout the seven rooms loudly and clearly—for the prince was a bold and robust man, and the music had become hushed at the waving of his hand.

It was in the blue room where stood the prince, with a group of pale courtiers by his side. At first, as he spoke, there was a slight rushing movement of this group in the direction of the intruder, who at the moment was also near at hand, and now, with deliberate and stately step, made closer approach to the speaker. But, from a certain nameless awe with which the mad assumptions of the mummer had inspired the whole party, there were found none who put forth hand to seize him; so that unimpeded he passed within a yard of the prince's person; and while the vast assembly, as if with one impulse, shrank from the centres of the rooms to the walls, he made his way uninterruptedly, but with the same solemn and measured step which had distinguished him from the first, through the blue chamber to the purple—through the purple to the green—through the green to the orange—through this again to the white—and even thence to the violet, ere a decided movement had been made to arrest him. It was then, however, that the Prince Prospero, maddening with rage and the shame of his own momentary cowardice, rushed hurriedly through the six chambers, while none followed him on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. He bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter, having attained the extremity of the velvet apartment, turned suddenly and confronted his pursuer. There was a sharp cry—and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet, upon which, instantly afterwards, fell prostrate in death the Prince Prospero. Then, summoning the wild courage of despair, a throng of the revellers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave ceremonies and corpse-like

mask which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form.

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night ; and one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall ; and the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay ; and the flames of the tripods expired ; and darkness and decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

THE thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as best I could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled—but the very definiteness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good-will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—though in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity—to practise imposture upon British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmary, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack—but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on tight-fitting party-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him : " My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day ! But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

" How ? " said he. " Amontillado ? A pipe ? Impossible ! And in the middle of the carnival ! "

" I have my doubts," I replied ; " and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

" Amontillado ! "

" I have my doubts."

" Amontillado ! "

" And I must satisfy them."

" Amontillado ! "

" As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchesi. If any one has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me——"

" Luchesi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

" And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own."

" Come, let us go."

" Whither ? "

" To your vaults."

" My friend, no ; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi——"

" I have no engagement——come."

" My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."

" Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado ! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk, and drawing a roquelaure closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home ; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe," said he.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

"Nitro?" he asked at length.

"Nitro," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!"

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said at last.

"Come," I said with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi——"

"Enough," he said; "the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True—true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily—but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damp."

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

"And I to your long life."

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

"I forget your arms."

"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are embedded in the heel."

"And the motto?"

"*Nemo me impune lacessit.*"

"Good!" he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through walls of piled bones, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough——"

"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc."

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grève. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed, and threw the bottle upward with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one.

"You do not comprehend?" he said.

"Not I," I replied.

"Then you are not of the brotherhood."

"How?"

"You are not of the masons."

"Yes, yes," I said, "yes, yes."

"You? Impossible! A mason?"

"A mason," I replied.

"A sign," he said.

"It is this," I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my roquelaure.

"You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."

"Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and, descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured

to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi——"

"He is an ignoramus," interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key, I stepped back from the recess.

"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed it is *very* damp. Once more let me *implore* you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power.

"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building-stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depths of the recess. It was *not* the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast, I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the masonwork, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated—I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric

of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed—I aided—I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out of the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognising as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said:

“Ha! ha! ha!—he! he! he!—a very good joke indeed—an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!”

“The Amontillado!” I said.

“He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo—the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone.”

“Yes,” I said, “let us be gone.”

“For the love of God, Montresor!”

“Yes,” I said, “for the love of God!”

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud:

“Fortunato!”

No answer. I called again:

“Fortunato!”

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick—on account of the dampness of the catacombs. I hastened to make an end of my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat.*

EDGAR ALLAN POE

WILLIAM WILSON

What say of it? what says CONSCIENCE grim?
That spectre in my path?

—CHAMBERLAIN'S *Pharonnida*.

LET me call myself, for the present, William Wilson. The fair page now lying before me need not be sullied with my real appellation. This has been already too much an object for the scorn, for the horror, for the detestation of my race. To the uttermost regions of the globe have not the indignant winds bruited its unparalleled infamy? O outcast of all outcasts most abandoned! to the earth art thou not for ever dead? to its honours, to its flowers, to its golden aspirations?—and a cloud, dense, dismal, and limitless, does it not hang eternally between thy hopes and heaven?

I would not, if I could, here or to-day, embody a record of my later years of unspeakable misery and unpardonable crime. This epoch—these later years—took unto themselves a sudden elevation in turpitude, whose origin alone it is my present purpose to assign. Men usually grow base by degrees. From me in an instant all virtue dropped bodily as a mantle. From comparatively trivial wickedness I passed, with the stride of a giant, into more than the enormities of an Elagabalus. What chance—what one event brought this evil thing to pass, bear with me while I relate. Death approaches, and the shadow which foreruns him has thrown a softening influence over my spirit. I long in passing through the dim valley for the sympathy, I had nearly said for the pity, of my fellow-men. I would fain have them believe that I have been in some measure the slave of circumstances beyond human control. I would wish them to seek out for me, in the details I am about to give, some little oasis of *fatality* amid a wilderness of error. I would have them allow, what they cannot refrain from allowing, that although temptation may have erewhile existed as great, man was never *thus* at least tempted before, certainly never *thus* fell. And is it therefore that he has never thus suffered? Have I not indeed been living in a dream? And am I not now dying a victim

to the horror and the mystery of the wildest of all sublunary visions ?

I am the descendant of a race whose imaginative and easily excitable temperament has at all times rendered them remarkable ; and in my earliest infancy I gave evidence of having fully inherited the family character. As I advanced in years it was more strongly developed, becoming for many reasons a cause of serious disquietude to my friends, and of positive injury to myself. I grew self-willed, addicted to the wildest caprices, and a prey to the most ungovernable passions. Weak-minded, and beset with constitutional infirmities akin to my own, my parents could do but little to check the evil propensities which distinguished me. Some feeble and ill-directed efforts resulted in complete failure on their part, and of course in total triumph on mine. Thenceforward my voice was a household law, and at an age when few children have abandoned their leading-strings, I was left to the guidance of my own will, and became in all but name the master of my own actions.

My earliest recollections of a school-life are connected with a large rambling Elizabethan house, in a misty-looking village of England, where were a vast number of gigantic and gnarled trees, and where all the houses were excessively ancient. In truth, it was a dream-like and spirit-soothing place, that venerable old town. At this moment, in fancy, I feel the refreshing chilliness of its deeply-shadowed avenues, inhale the fragrance of its thousand shrubberies, and thrill anew with indefinable delight at the deep hollow note of the church-bell, breaking each hour with sullen and sudden roar upon the stillness of the dusky atmosphere in which the fretted Gothic steeple lay imbedded and asleep.

It gives me perhaps as much of pleasure as I can now in any manner experience to dwell upon minute recollections of the school and its concerns. Steeped in misery as I am—misery, alas ! only too real—I shall be pardoned for seeking relief, however slight and temporary, in the weakness of a few rambling details. These, moreover, utterly trivial, and even ridiculous in themselves, assume to my fancy adventitious importance, as connected with a period and a locality when and where I recognise the first ambiguous monitions of the destiny which afterwards so fully overshadowed me. Let me then remember.

The house, I have said, was old and irregular. The grounds were extensive, and a high and solid brick wall, topped with a bed of mortar and broken glass, encompassed the whole. This prison-like rampart formed the limit of our domain ; beyond it we saw but thrice a week, once every Saturday afternoon, when, attended by two ushers, we were permitted to take brief walks in a body through some of the neighbouring fields ; and twice during Sunday, when

we were paraded in the same formal manner to the morning and evening service in the one church of the village. Of this church the principal of our school was pastor. With how deep a spirit of wonder and perplexity was I wont to regard him from our remote pew in the gallery, as with step solemn and slow he ascended the pulpit ! This reverend man, with countenance so demurely benign, with robes so glossy and so clerically flowing, with wig so minutely powdered, so rigid and so vast—could this be he who, of late, with sour visage, and in snuffy habiliments, administered, ferule in hand, the Draconian laws of the academy ? O gigantic paradox, too utterly monstrous for solution !

At an angle of the ponderous wall frowned a more ponderous gate. It was riveted and studded with iron bolts, and surmounted with jagged iron spikes. What impressions of deep awe did it inspire ! It was never opened save for the three periodical egressions and ingressions already mentioned ; then in every creak of its mighty hinges we found a plentitude of mystery, a world of matter for solemn remark, or for more solemn meditation.

The extensive enclosure was irregular in form, having many capacious recesses. Of these, three or four of the largest constituted the play-ground. It was level, and covered with fine hard gravel. I well remember it had no trees nor benches, nor anything similar within it. Of course it was in the rear of the house. In front lay a small parterre, planted with box and other shrubs, but through this sacred division we passed only upon rare occasions indeed, such as a first advent to school or final departure thence, or perhaps when, a parent or a friend having called for us, we joyfully took our way home for the Christmas or Midsummer holidays.

But the house !—how quaint an old building was this ! to me how veritably a palace of enchantment ! There was really no end to its windings, to its incomprehensible subdivisions. It was difficult, at any given time, to say with certainty upon which of its two storeys one happened to be. From each room to every other there were sure to be found three or four steps either in ascent or descent. Then the lateral branches were innumerable, inconceivable, and so returning in upon themselves that our most exact ideas in regard to the whole mansion were not very far different from those with which we pondered upon infinity. During the five years of my residence here I was never able to ascertain with precision in what remote locality lay the little sleeping apartment assigned to myself and some eighteen or twenty other scholars.

The schoolroom was the largest in the house, I could not help thinking, in the world. It was very long, narrow, and dismally low, with pointed Gothic windows and a ceiling of oak. In a remote and terror-inspiring angle was a square enclosure of eight or ten feet,

comprising the *sanctum* "during hours," of our principal, the Reverend Dr. Bransby. It was a solid structure, with massy door, sooner than open which in the absence of the "dominie" we would all have willingly perished by the *peine forte et dure*. In other angles were two other similar boxes, far less revered, indeed, but still greatly matters of awe. One of these was the pulpit of the "classical" usher, one of the "English and mathematical." Interspersed about the room, crossing and recrossing in endless irregularity, were innumerable benches and desks, black, ancient, and time-worn, piled desperately with much-bethumbed books, and, so besearched with initial letters, names at full length, grotesque figures, and other multiplied efforts of the knife, as to have entirely lost what little of original form might have been their portion in days long departed. A huge bucket with water stood at one extremity of the room, and a clock of stupendous dimensions at the other.

Encompassed by the massy walls of this venerable academy, I passed, yet not in a tedium or disgust, the years of the third lustrum of my life. The teeming brain of childhood requires no external world of incident to occupy or amuse it; and the apparently dismal monotony of a school was replete with more intense excitement than my riper youth has derived from luxury, or my full manhood from crime. Yet I must believe that my first mental development had in it much of the uncommon—even much of the *outré*. Upon mankind at large the events of very early existence rarely leave in mature age any definite impressions. All is grey shadow—a weak and irregular remembrance—an indistinct regathering of feeble pleasures and phantasmagoric pains. With me this is not so. In childhood I must have felt with the energy of a man what I now find stamped upon memory in lines as vivid, as deep, and as durable as the *exergues* of the Carthaginian medals.

Yet in fact—in the fact of the world's view—how little was there to remember! The morning's awakening, the nightly summons to bed; the connings, the recitations; the periodical half-holidays, and perambulations; the playground, with its broils, its pastimes, its intrigues;—these, by a mental sorcery long forgotten, were made to involve a wilderness of sensation, a world of rich incident, a universe of varied emotion, of excitement the most passionate and spirit-stirring. "*Oh le bon temps, que ce siècle de fer!*"

In truth, the ardour, the enthusiasm, and the imperiousness of my disposition, soon rendered me a marked character among my schoolmates, and by slow but natural graduations gave me an ascendancy over all not greatly older than myself—over all with a single exception. This exception was found in the person of a scholar, who, although no relation, bore the same Christian and surname as myself, a circumstance, in fact, little remarkable; for

notwithstanding a noble descent, mine was one of those everyday appellations which seem, by prescriptive right, to have been, time out of mind, the common property of the mob. In this narrative I have therefore designated myself as William Wilson—a fictitious title not very dissimilar to the real. My namesake alone, of those who in school phraseology constituted "our set," presumed to compete with me in the studies of the class—in the sports and broils of the playground—to refuse implicit belief in my assertions, and submission to my will—indeed, to interfere with my arbitrary dictation in any respect whatsoever. If there is on earth a supreme and unqualified despotism, it is the despotism of a master-mind in boyhood over the less energetic spirits of its companions.

Wilson's rebellion was to me a source of the greatest embarrassment: the more so as, in spite of the bravado with which in public I made a point of treating him and his pretensions, I secretly felt that I feared him, and could not help thinking the equality which he maintained so easily with myself a proof of his true superiority, since not to be overcome cost me a perpetual struggle. Yet this superiority—even this equality—was in truth acknowledged by no one but myself; our associates, by some unaccountable blindness, seemed not even to suspect it. Indeed, his competition, his resistance, and especially his impertinent and dogged interference with my purposes, were not more pointed than private. He appeared to be destitute alike of the ambition which urged, and of the passionate energy of mind which enabled me to excel. In his rivalry he might have been supposed actuated solely by a whimsical desire to thwart, astonish, or mortify myself; although there were times when I could not help observing, with a feeling made up of wonder, amazement, and pique, that he mingled with his injuries, his insults, or his contradictions, a certain most inappropriate, and assuredly most unwelcome *affectionateness* of manner. I could only conceive this singular behaviour to arise from a consummate self-conceit assuming the vulgar airs of patronage and protection.

Perhaps it was this latter trait in Wilson's conduct, conjoined with our identity of name, and the mere accident of our having entered the school upon the same day, which set afloat the notion that we were brothers among the senior classes in the academy. These do not usually inquire with much strictness into the affairs of their juniors. I have before said, or should have said, that Wilson was not, in the most remote degree, connected with my family. But assuredly if we *had* been brothers we must have been twins; for, after leaving Dr. Bransby's, I casually learned that my namesake was born on the nineteenth of January 1813— and this is a somewhat remarkable coincidence, for the day is precisely that of my own nativity.

It may seem strange that in spite of the continual anxiety occasioned me by the rivalry of Wilson, and his intolerable spirit of contradiction, I could not bring myself to hate him altogether. We had, to be sure, nearly every day a quarrel, in which, yielding me publicly the palm of victory, he in some manner contrived to make me feel that it was he who had deserved it, yet a sense of pride on my part and a veritable dignity on his own, kept us always upon what are called "speaking terms," while there were many points of strong congeniality in our tempers, operating to awake in me a sentiment which our position alone, perhaps, prevented from ripening into friendship. It is difficult indeed to define or even to describe my real feelings towards him. They formed a motley and heterogeneous admixture; some petulant animosity, which was not yet hatred, some esteem, more respect, much fear, with a world of uneasy curiosity. To the moralist it will be unnecessary to say in addition that Wilson and myself were the most inseparable of companions.

It was no doubt the anomalous state of affairs existing between us which turned all my attacks upon him (and they were many, either open or covert) into the channel of banter or practical joke (giving pain while assuming the aspect of mere fun), rather than into a more serious and determined hostility. But my endeavours on this head were by no means uniformly successful, even when my plans were the most wittily concocted; for my namesake had much about him in character of that unassuming and quiet austerity which, while enjoying the poignancy of its own jokes, has no heel of Achilles in itself, and absolutely refuses to be laughed at. I could find indeed but one vulnerable point, and that lying in a personal peculiarity, arising perhaps from constitutional disease, would have been spared by any antagonist less at his wit's end than myself; my rival had a weakness in the faucal or guttural organs which precluded him from raising his voice at any time *above a very low whisper*. Of this defect I did not fail to take what poor advantage lay in my power.

Wilson's retaliations in kind were many; and there was one form of his practical wit that disturbed me beyond measure. How his sagacity first discovered at all that so petty a thing would vex me is a question I never could solve, but having discovered, he habitually practised the annoyance. I had always felt aversion to my uncourtly patronymic and its very common, if not plebeian prænomen. The words were venom in my ears; and when, upon the day of my arrival, a second William Wilson came also to the academy, I felt angry with him for bearing the name and doubly disgusted with the name because a stranger bore it, who would be the cause of its twofold repetition, who would be constantly in my presence, and

whose concerns, in the ordinary routine of the school business, must inevitably, on account of the detestable coincidence, be often confounded with my own.

The feeling of vexation thus engendered grew stronger with every circumstance tending to show resemblance, moral or physical, between my rival and myself. I had not then discovered the remarkable fact that we were of the same age ; but I saw that we were of the same height, and I perceived that we were even singularly alike in general contour of person and outline of feature. I was galled, too, by the rumour touching a relationship, which had grown current in the upper forms. In a word, nothing could more seriously disturb me (although I scrupulously concealed such disturbance) than any allusion to a similarity of mind, person, or condition existing between us. But, in truth, I had no reason to believe that (with the exception of the matter of relationship, and in the case of Wilson himself) this similarity had ever been made a subject of comment or even observed at all by our school-fellows. That *he* observed it in all its bearings, and as fixedly as I, was apparent ; but that he could discover in such circumstances so fruitful a field of annoyance can only be attributed, as I said before, to his more than ordinary penetration.

His cue, which was to perfect an imitation of myself, lay both in words and in actions, and most admirably did he play his part. My dress it was an easy matter to copy ; my gait and general manner were without difficulty appropriated ; in spite of his constitutional defect, even my voice did not escape him. My louder tones were of course unattempted, but then the key, it was identical ; *and his singular whisper, it grew the very echo of my own.*

How greatly this most exquisite portraiture harassed me (for it could not justly be termed a caricature), I will not now venture to describe. I had but one consolation—in the fact that the imitation, apparently, was noticed by myself alone, and that I had to endure only the knowing and strangely sarcastic smiles of my namesake himself. Satisfied with having produced in my bosom the intended effect, he seemed to chuckle in secret over the sting he had inflicted, and was characteristically disregarding of the public applause which the success of his witty endeavours might have so easily elicited. That the school, indeed, did not feel his design, perceive its accomplishment, and participate in his sneer, was for many anxious months a riddle I could not resolve. Perhaps the *gradation* of his copy rendered it not so readily perceptible, or more possibly I owed my security to the masterly air of the copyist, who, disdaining the letter (which in a painting is all the obtuse can see), gave but the full spirit of his original for my individual contemplation and chagrin.

I have already more than once spoken of the disgusting air of

patronage which he assumed toward me, and of his frequent officious interference with my will. This interference often took the ungracious character of advice—advice not openly given but hinted or insinuated. I received it with a repugnance which gained strength as I grew in years. Yet at this distant day, let me do him the simple justice to acknowledge that I can recall no occasion when the suggestions of my rival were on the side of those errors or follies so usual to his immature age and seeming inexperience; that his moral sense, at least, if not his general talents and worldly wisdom, was far keener than my own; and that I might to-day have been a better, and thus a happier man, had I less frequently rejected the counsels embodied in those meaning whispers which I then but too cordially hated and too bitterly despised.

As it was, I at length grew restive in the extreme under his distasteful supervision, and daily resented more and more openly what I considered his intolerable arrogance. I have said that in the first years of our connection as schoolmates, my feelings in regard to him might have been easily ripened into friendship; but, in the latter months of my residence at the academy, although the intrusion of his ordinary manner had, beyond doubt, in some measure abated, my sentiments in nearly similar proportion partook very much of positive hatred. Upon one occasion he saw this, I think, and afterwards avoided, or made a show of avoiding me.

It was about the same period, if I remember aright, that, in an altercation of violence with him, in which he was more than usually thrown off his guard, and spoke and acted with an openness of demeanour rather foreign to his nature, I discovered, or fancied I discovered, in his accent, his air, and general appearance, a something which first startled, and then deeply interested me, by bringing to mind dim visions of my earliest infancy, wild, confused, and thronging memories of a time when memory herself was yet unborn. I cannot better describe the sensation which oppressed me than by saying that I could with difficulty shake off the belief of my having been acquainted with the being who stood before me at some epoch very long ago, some point of the past even infinitely remote. The delusion, however, faded rapidly as it came, and I mention it at all but to define the day of the last conversation I there held with my singular namesake.

The huge old house, with its countless subdivisions, had several large chambers communicating with each other, where slept the greater number of the students. There were, however (as must necessarily happen in a building so awkwardly planned), many little nooks or recesses, the odds and ends of the structure, and these the economic ingenuity of Dr. Bransby had also fitted up as dormitories, although, being the merest closets, they were capable

of accommodating but a single individual. One of these small apartments was occupied by Wilson.

One night, about the close of my fifth year at the school and immediately after the altercation just mentioned, finding every one wrapped in sleep, I arose from bed, and, lamp in hand, stole through a wilderness of narrow passages from my own bedroom to that of my rival. I had long been plotting one of those ill-natured pieces of practical wit at his expense in which I had hitherto been so uniformly unsuccessful. It was my intention now to put my scheme in operation, and I resolved to make him feel the whole extent of the malice with which I was imbued. Having reached his closet I noiselessly entered, leaving the lamp, with a shade over it, on the outside. I advanced a step and listened to the sound of his tranquil breathing. Assured of his being asleep, I returned, took the light, and with it again approached the bed. Close curtains were around it, which, in the prosecution of my plan, I slowly and quietly withdrew, when the bright rays fell vividly upon the sleeper, and my eyes, at the same moment, upon his countenance. I looked, and a numbness, an iciness of feeling, instantly pervaded my frame. My breast heaved, my knees tottered, my whole spirit became possessed with an objectless yet intolerable horror. Gasping for breath I lowered the lamp in still nearer proximity to the face. Were these, —*these* the lineaments of William Wilson? I saw, indeed, that they were his, but I shook as if with a fit of the ague in fancying they were not. What *was* there about them to confound me in this manner? I gazed, while my brain reeled with a multitude of incoherent thoughts. Not thus he appeared, assuredly not *thus*, in the vivacity of his waking hours. The same name, the same contour of person, the same day of arrival at the academy; and then his dogged and meaningless imitation of my gait, my voice, my habits, and my manner. Was it, in truth, within the bounds of human possibility that *what I now saw* was the result merely of the habitual practice of this sarcastic imitation? Awe-stricken, and with a creeping shudder, I extinguished the lamp, passed silently from the chamber, and left at once the halls of that old academy, never to enter them again.

After a lapse of some months, spent at home in mere idleness, I found myself a student at Eton. The brief interval had been sufficient to enfeeble my remembrance of the events at Dr. Bransby's, or at least to effect a material change in the nature of the feelings with which I remembered them. The truth, the tragedy, of the drama was no more. I could now find room to doubt the evidence of my senses, and seldom called up the subject at all but with wonder at the extent of human credulity, and a smile at the vivid force of the imagination which I hereditarily possessed. Neither was this

species of scepticism likely to be diminished by the character of the life I led at Eton. The vortex of thoughtless folly into which I there so immediately and so recklessly plunged washed away all but the froth of my past hours, engulfed at once every solid or serious impression, and left to memory only the veriest levities of a former existence.

I do not wish, however, to trace the course of my miserable profligacy here—a profligacy which set at defiance the laws, while it eluded the vigilance of the institution. Three years of folly, passed without profit, had but given me rooted habits of vice, and added, in a somewhat unusual degree, to my bodily stature, when, after a week of soulless dissipation, I invited a small party of the most dissolute students to a secret carousal in my chambers. We met at a late hour of the night, for our debaucheries were to be faithfully protracted until morning. The wine flowed freely, and there were not wanting other and perhaps more dangerous seductions, so that the grey dawn had already faintly appeared in the east, while our delirious extravagance was at its height. Madly flushed with cards and intoxication, I was in the act of insisting upon a toast of more than wonted profanity when my attention was suddenly diverted by the violent, although partial, unclosing of the door of the apartment, and by the eager voice of a servant from without. He said that some person, apparently in great haste, demanded to speak with me in the hall.

Wildly excited with wine, the unexpected interruption rather delighted than surprised me. I staggered forward at once, and a few steps brought me to the vestibule of the building. In this low and small room there hung no lamp, and now no light at all was admitted, save that of the exceedingly feeble dawn which made its way through the semi-circular window. As I put my foot over the threshold I became aware of the figure of a youth about my own height, and habited in a white kerseymere morning frock, cut in the novel fashion of the one I myself wore at the moment. This the faint light enabled me to perceive, but the features of his face I could not distinguish. Upon my entering he strode hurriedly up to me, and seizing me by the arm with a gesture of petulant impatience, whispered the words "William Wilson!" in my ear.

I grew perfectly sober in an instant.

There was that in the manner of the stranger, and in the tremulous shake of his uplifted finger, as he held it between my eyes and the light, which filled me with unqualified amazement; but it was not this which had so violently moved me. It was the pregnancy of solemn admonition in the singular, low, hissing utterance, and, above all, it was the character, the tone, *the key*, of those few, simple, and familiar, yet *whispered* syllables, which came with a thousand

thronging memories of by-gone days, and struck upon my soul with the shock of a galvanic battery. Ere I could recover the use of my senses he was gone.

Although this event failed not of a vivid effect upon my disordered imagination, yet was it evanescent as vivid. For some weeks, indeed, I busied myself in earnest inquiry, or was wrapped in a cloud of morbid speculation. I did not pretend to disguise from my perception the identity of the singular individual who thus perseveringly interfered with my affairs, and harassed me with his insinuated counsel. But who and what was this Wilson?—and whence came he?—and what were his purposes? Upon neither of these points could I be satisfied—merely ascertaining in regard to him, that a sudden accident in his family had caused his removal from Dr. Bransby's academy on the afternoon of the day in which I myself had eloped. But in a brief period I ceased to think upon the subject, my attention being all absorbed in a contemplated departure for Oxford. Thither I soon went, the uncalculating vanity of my parents furnishing me with an outfit and annual establishment which would enable me to indulge at will in the luxury already so dear to my heart—to vie in profuseness of expenditure with the haughtiest heirs of the wealthiest earldoms in Great Britain.

Excited by such appliances to vice, my constitutional temperament broke forth with redoubled ardour, and I spurned even the common restraints of decency in the mad infatuation of my revels. But it were absurd to pause in the detail of my extravagance. Let it suffice, that among spendthrifts I out-Heroded Herod, and that giving name to a multitude of novel follies, I added no brief appendix to the long catalogue of vices then usual in the most dissolute university of Europe.

It could hardly be credited, however that I had, even here, so utterly fallen from the gentlemanly estate as to seek acquaintance with the vilest arts of the gambler by profession, and having become an adept in his despicable science, to practise it habitually as a means of increasing my already enormous income at the expense of the weakminded among my fellow-collegians. Such, nevertheless, was the fact; and the very enormity of this offence against all manly and honourable sentiment proved, beyond doubt, the main, if not the sole reason of the impunity with which it was committed. Who, indeed, among my most abandoned associates would not rather have disputed the clearest evidence of his senses than have suspected of such courses the gay, the frank, the generous William Wilson—the noblest and most liberal commoner at Oxford—him whose follies (said his parasites) were but the follies of youth and unbridled fancy—whose errors but inimitable whim—whose darkest vice but a careless and dashing extravagance?

I had been now two years successfully busied in this way when there came to the university a young *parvenu* nobleman, Glendinning—rich, said report, as Herodes Atticus—his riches, too, as easily acquired. I soon found him of weak intellect, and of course marked him as a fitting subject for my skill. I frequently engaged him in play, and contrived with the gambler's usual art to let him win considerable sums, the more effectually to entangle him in my snares. At length, my schemes being ripe, I met him (with the full intention that this meeting should be final and decisive) at the chambers of a fellow-commoner (Mr. Preston) equally intimate with both, but who, to do him justice, entertained not even a remote suspicion of my design. To give to this a better colouring I had contrived to have assembled a party of some eight or ten, and was solicitously careful that the introduction of cards should appear accidental, and originate in the proposal of my contemplated dupe himself. To be brief upon a vile topic, none of the low finesse was omitted, so customary upon similar occasions, that it is a just matter for wonder how any are still found so besotted as to fall its victim.

We had protracted our sitting far into the night, and I had at length effected the manœuvre of getting Glendinning as my sole antagonist. The game, too was my favourite *écarté*. The rest of the company, interested in the extent of our play, had abandoned their own cards, and were standing around us as spectators. The *parvenu*, who had been induced by my artifices in the early part of the evening to drink deeply, now shuffled, dealt, or played, with a wild nervousness of manner for which his intoxication I thought might partially but could not altogether account. In a very short period he had become my debtor to a large amount, when, having taken a long draught of port, he did precisely what I had been coolly anticipating—he proposed to double our already extravagant stakes. With a well-feigned show of reluctance, and not until after my repeated refusal had seduced him into some angry words which gave a colour of *pique* to my compliance, did I finally comply. The result of course did but prove how entirely the prey was in my toils: in less than an hour he had quadrupled his debt. For some time his countenance had been losing the florid tinge lent it by the wine, but now to my astonishment I perceived that it had grown to a pallor truly fearful. I say to my astonishment. Glendinning had been represented to my eager inquiries as immeasurably wealthy; and the sums which he had as yet lost, although in themselves vast, could not, I supposed, very seriously annoy, much less so violently affect him. That he was overcome by the wine just swallowed was the idea which most readily presented itself; and, rather with a view to the preservation of my own character in the eyes of my associates, than from any less interested motive, I was about to

insist peremptorily upon a discontinuance of the play, when some expressions at my elbow from among the company, and an ejaculation evincing utter despair on the part of Glendinning, gave me to understand that I had effected his total ruin under circumstances which, rendering him an object for the pity of all, should have protected him from the ill offices even of a fiend.

What now might have been my conduct it is difficult to say. The pitiable condition of my dupe had thrown an air of embarrassed gloom over all, and for some moments a profound silence was maintained, during which I could not help feeling my cheeks tingle with the many burning glances of scorn or reproach cast upon me by the less abandoned of the party. I will even own that an intolerable weight of anxiety was a brief instant lifted from my bosom by the sudden and extraordinary interruption which ensued. The wide heavy folding-doors of the apartment were all at once thrown open to their full extent, with a vigorous and rushing impetuosity that extinguished, as if by magic, every candle in the room. Their light, in dying, enabled us just to perceive that a stranger had entered, about my own height, and closely muffled in a cloak. The darkness, however, was now total, and we could only *feel* that he was standing in our midst. Before any one of us could recover from the extreme astonishment into which this rudeness had thrown all, we heard the voice of the intruder.

"Gentlemen," he said, in a low, distinct, and never-to-be-forgotten *whisper* which thrilled to the very marrow of my bones, "Gentlemen, I make no apology for this behaviour, because in thus behaving, I am but fulfilling my duty. You are, beyond doubt, uninformed of the true character of the person who has to-night won at *écarté* a large sum of money from Lord Glendinning. I will therefore put you upon an expeditious and decisive plan of obtaining this very necessary information. Please to examine at your leisure the inner linings of the cuff of his left sleeve, and the several little packages which may be found in the somewhat capacious pockets of his embroidered morning wrapper."

While he spoke, so profound was the stillness that one might have heard a pin drop upon the floor. In ceasing, he departed at once, and as abruptly as he had entered. Can I—shall I describe my sensations? Must I say that I felt all the horrors of the damned? Most assuredly I had little time for reflection. Many hands roughly seized me upon the spot, and lights were immediately re-procured. A search ensued. In the lining of my sleeve were found all the court cards essential in *écarté*, and in the pockets of my wrapper a number of packs, fac-similes of those used at our sittings, with the single exception that mine were of the species called, technically, *arrondées*; the honours being slightly convex at the ends, the lower

cards slightly convex at the sides. In this disposition, the dupe who cuts, as customary, at the length of the pack, will invariably find that he cuts his antagonist an honour; while the gambler, cutting at the breadth, will as certainly cut nothing for his victim which may count in the records of the game.

Any burst of indignation upon this discovery would have affected me less than the silent contempt, or the sarcastic composure, with which it was received.

"Mr. Wilson," said our host, stooping to remove from beneath his feet an exceedingly luxurious cloak of rare furs, "Mr. Wilson, this is your property." (The weather was cold; and, upon quitting my own room, I had thrown a cloak over my dressing wrapper, putting it off upon reaching the scene of play.) "I presume it is supererogatory to seek here (eyeing the folds of the garment with a bitter smile) for any further evidence of your skill. Indeed, we have had enough. You will see the necessity, I hope, of quitting Oxford—at all events, of quitting instantly my chambers."

Abased, humbled to the dust as I then was, it is probable that I should have resented this galling language by immediate personal violence, had not my whole attention been at the moment arrested by a fact of the most startling character. The cloak which I had worn was of a rare description of fur; how rare, how extravagantly costly, I shall not venture to say. Its fashion, too, was of my own fantastic invention, for I was fastidious to an absurd degree of coxcombry in matters of this frivolous nature. When, therefore, Mr. Preston reached me that which he had picked up upon the floor, and near the folding doors of the apartment, it was with an astonishment nearly bordering upon terror, that I perceived my own already hanging on my arm (where I had no doubt unwittingly placed it), and that the one presented me was but its exact counterpart in every, in even the minutest possible particular. The singular being who had so disastrously exposed me had been muffled, I remembered, in a cloak, and none had been worn at all by any of the members of our party with the exception of myself. Retaining some presence of mind, I took the one offered me by Preston, placed it unnoticed over my own, left the apartment with a resolute scowl of defiance, and next morning, ere dawn of day, commenced a hurried journey from Oxford to the Continent in a perfect agony of horror and of shame.

I fled in vain. My evil destiny pursued me as if in exultation, and proved indeed that the exercise of its mysterious dominion had as yet only begun. Scarcely had I set foot in Paris ere I had fresh evidence of the detestable interest taken by this Wilson in my concerns. Years flew while I experienced no relief. Villain!—at Rome, with how untimely, yet with how spectral an officiousness,

stepped he in between me and my ambition ! At Vienna, too—at Berlin—and at Moscow ! Where, in truth, had I *not* bitter cause to curse him within my heart ? From his inscrutable tyranny did I at length flee, panic-stricken, as from a pestilence ; and to the very ends of the earth I *fled in vain*.

And again and again, in secret communion with my own spirit, would I demand the questions " Who is he ?—whence came he ?—and what are his objects ? " But no answer was there found. And now I scrutinised, with a minute scrutiny, the forms, and the methods, and the leading traits of his impertinent supervision. But even here there was very little upon which to base a conjecture. It was noticeable, indeed, that in no one of the multiplied instances in which he had of late crossed my path had he so crossed it except to frustrate those schemes, or to disturb those actions, which, if fully carried out, might have resulted in bitter mischief. Poor justification this, in truth, for an authority so imperiously assumed ! Poor indemnity for natural rights of self-agency so pertinaciously, so insultingly denied !

I had also been forced to notice that my tormentor for a very long period of time (while scrupulously and with miraculous dexterity maintaining his whim of an identity of apparel with myself) had so contrived it, in the execution of his varied interference with my will, that I saw not in any moment the features of his face. Be Wilson what he might, *this* at least was but the veriest of affectation or of folly. Could he for an instant have supposed that in my admonisher at Eton—in the destroyer of my honour at Oxford—in him who thwarted my ambition at Rome, my revenge at Paris, my passionate love at Naples, or what he falsely termed my avarice in Egypt,—that in this, my arch-enemy and evil genius, I could fail to recognise the William Wilson of my school-boy days,—the namesake, the companion, the rival,—the hated and dreaded rival of Dr. Bransby's ? Impossible !—But let me hasten to the last eventful scene of the drama.

Thus far I had succumbed supinely to this imperious domination. The sentiment of deep awe with which I habitually regarded the elevated character, the majestic wisdom, the apparent omnipresence and omnipotence of Wilson, added to a feeling of even terror, with which certain other traits in his nature and assumptions inspired me, had operated hitherto to impress me with an idea of my own utter weakness and helplessness, and to suggest an implicit, although bitterly reluctant submission to his arbitrary will. But of late days I had given myself up entirely to wine, and its maddening influence upon my hereditary temper rendered me more and more impatient of control. I began to murmur,—to hesitate,—to resist. And was it only fancy which induced me to believe that, with the increase of

my own firmness, that of my tormentor underwent a proportional diminution? Be this as it may, I now began to feel the inspiration of a burning hope, and at length nurtured in my secret thoughts a stern and desperate resolution that I would submit no longer to be enslaved.

It was at Rome, during the Carnival of 18—, that I attended a masquerade in the palazzo of the Neapolitan Duke Di Broglio. I had indulged more freely than usual in the excesses of the wine-table, and now the suffocating atmosphere of the crowded rooms irritated me beyond endurance. The difficulty, too, of forcing my way through the mazes of the company contributed not a little to the ruffling of my temper; for I was anxiously seeking (let me not say with what unworthy motive) the young, the gay, the beautiful wife of the aged and doting Di Broglio. With a too unscrupulous confidence she had previously communicated to me the secret of the costume in which she would be habited, and now, having caught a glimpse of her person, I was hurrying to make my way into her presence. At this moment I felt a light hand placed upon my shoulder, and that ever-remembered, low, damnable *whisper* within my ear.

In an absolute frenzy of wrath I turned at once upon him who had thus interrupted me, and seized him violently by the collar. He was attired, as I had expected, in a costume altogether similar to my own, wearing a Spanish cloak of blue velvet, begirt about the waist with a crimson belt sustaining a rapier. A mask of black silk entirely covered his face.

"Scoundrel!" I said, in a voice husky with rage, while every syllable I uttered seemed as new fuel to my fury; "scoundrel! impostor! accursed villain! you shall not—you *shall not* dog me unto death! Follow me, or I stab you where you stand!"—and I broke my way from the ball-room into a small ante-chamber adjoining, dragging him unresistingly with me as I went.

Upon entering, I thrust him furiously from me. He staggered against the wall, while I closed the door with an oath, and commanded him to draw. He hesitated but for an instant; then, with a slight sigh, drew in silence, and put himself upon his defence.

The contest was brief indeed. I was frantic with every species of wild excitement, and felt within my single arm the energy and power of a multitude. In a few seconds I forced him by sheer strength against the wainscoting, and thus, getting him at mercy, plunged my sword, with brute ferocity, repeatedly through and through his bosom.

At that instant some person tried the latch of the door. I hastened to prevent an intrusion, and then immediately returned to my dying antagonist. But what human language can adequately portray *that*

astonishment, *that* horror which possessed me at the spectacle then presented to view ? The brief moment in which I averted my eyes had been sufficient to produce apparently a material change in the arrangements at the upper or farther end of the room. A large mirror—so at first it seemed to me in my confusion—now stood where none had been perceptible before ; and, as I stepped up to it in extremity of terror, mine own image, but with features all pale and dabbled in blood, advanced to meet me with a feeble and tottering gait.

Thus it appeared, I say, but was not. It was my antagonist—it was Wilson who then stood before me in the agonies of his dissolution. His mask and cloak lay where he had thrown them upon the floor. Not a thread in all his raiment—not a line in all the marked and singular lineaments of his face which was not, even in the most absolute identity, *mine own !*

It was Wilson ; but he spoke no longer in a whisper, and I could have fancied that I myself was speaking while he said :

“ You have conquered and I yield. Yet, henceforward art thou also dead—dead to the World, to Heaven, and to Hope ! In me didst thou exist—and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself.”

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE OVAL PORTRAIT

THE château into which my valet had ventured to make forcible entrance, rather than permit me, in my desperately wounded condition, to pass a night in the open air, was one of those piles of commingled gloom and grandeur which have so long frowned among the Apennines, not less in fact than in the fancy of Mrs. Radcliffe. To all appearance it had been temporarily and very lately abandoned. We established ourselves in one of the smallest and least sumptuously furnished apartments. It lay in a remote turret of the building. Its decorations were rich, yet tattered and antique. Its walls were hung with tapestry and bedecked with manifold and multiform armorial trophies, together with an unusually great number of very spirited modern paintings in frames of rich golden arabesque. In these paintings, which depended from the walls not only in their main surfaces, but in very many nooks which the bizarre architecture of the château rendered necessary—in these paintings my incipient delirium, perhaps, had caused me to take deep interest; so that I bade Pedro to close the heavy shutters of the room—since it was already night—to light the tongues of a tall candelabrum which stood by the head of my bed—and to throw open far and wide the fringed curtains of black velvet which enveloped the bed itself. I wished all this done that I might resign myself, if not to sleep, at least alternately to the contemplation of these pictures, and the perusal of a small volume which had been found upon the pillow, and which purported to criticise and describe them.

Long—long I read—and devoutly, devotedly I gazed. Rapidly and gloriously the hours flew by, and the deep midnight came. The position of the candelabrum displeased me, and outreaching my hand with difficulty, rather than disturb my slumbering valet, I placed it so as to throw its rays more fully upon the book.

But the action produced an effect altogether unanticipated. The rays of the numerous candles (for there were many) now fell within a niche of the room which had hitherto been thrown into deep shade by

one of the bed-posts. I thus saw in vivid light a picture all unnoticed before. It was the portrait of a young girl just ripening into womanhood. I glanced at the painting hurriedly, and then closed my eyes. Why I did this was not at first apparent even to my own perception. But while my lids remained thus shut, I ran over in mind my reason for so shutting them. It was an impulsive movement to gain time for thought—to make sure that my vision had not deceived me—to calm and subdue my fancy for a more sober and more certain gaze. In a very few moments I again looked fixedly at the painting.

That I now saw aright I could not and would not doubt; for the first flashing of the candles upon that canvas had seemed to dissipate the dreamy stupor which was stealing over my senses, and to startle me at once into waking life.

The portrait, I have already said, was that of a young girl. It was a mere head and shoulders, done in what is technically termed a *vignette* manner; much in the style of the favourite heads of Sully. The arms, the bosom, and even the ends of the radiant hair, melted imperceptibly into the vague yet deep shadow which formed the background of the whole. The frame was oval, richly gilded and filigreed in *Moresque*. As a thing of art nothing could be more admirable than the painting itself. But it could have been neither the execution of the work, nor the immortal beauty of the countenance, which had so suddenly and so vehemently moved me. Least of all could it have been that my fancy, shaken from its half slumber, had mistaken the head for that of a living person. I saw at once that the peculiarities of the design, of the *vignetting*, and of the frame, must have instantly dispelled such idea—must have prevented even its momentary entertainment. Thinking earnestly upon these points, I remained, for an hour perhaps, half-sitting, half-reclining, with my vision riveted upon the portrait. At length, satisfied with the true secret of its effect, I fell back within the bed. I had found the spell of the picture in an absolute *life-likeness* of expression, which, at first startling, finally confounded, subdued, and appalled me. With deep and reverent awe I replaced the candelabrum in its former position. The cause of my deep agitation being thus shut from view, I sought eagerly the volume which discussed the paintings and their histories. Turning to the number which designated the oval portrait, I there read the vague and quaint words which follow:—

“She was a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee. And evil was the hour when she saw, and loved, and wedded the painter. He, passionate, studious, austere, and having already a bride in his Art; she, a maiden of rarest beauty, and not more lovely than full of glee: all light and smiles, and frolicsome

as the young fawn : loving and cherishing all things : hating only the Art which was her rival : dreading only the pallet and brushes and other untoward instruments which deprived her of the countenance of her lover. It was thus a terrible thing for this lady to hear the painter speak of his desire to portray even his young bride. But she was humble and obedient, and sat meekly for many weeks in the dark high turret-chamber where the light dripped upon the pale canvas only from overhead. But he, the painter, took glory in his work, which went on from hour to hour, and from day to day. And he was a passionate, and wild, and moody man, who became lost in reveries ; so that he *would* not see that the light which fell so ghastly in that lone turret withered the health and the spirits of his bride, who pined visibly to all but him. Yet she smiled on and still on, uncomplainingly, because she saw that the painter (who had high renown) took a fervid and burning pleasure in his task, and wrought day and night to depict her who so loved him, yet who grew daily more dispirited and weak. And in sooth some who beheld the portrait spoke of its resemblance in low words, as of a mighty marvel, and a proof not less of the power of the painter than of his deep love for her whom he depicted so surpassingly well. But at length, as the labour drew nearer to its conclusion, there were admitted none into the turret ; for the painter had grown wild with the ardour of his work, and turned his eyes from the canvas rarely, even to regard the countenance of his wife. And he *would* not see that the tints which he spread upon the canvas were drawn from the cheeks of her who sat beside him. And when many weeks had passed, and but little remained to do, save one brush upon the mouth and one tint upon the eye, the spirit of the lady again flickered up as the flame within the socket of the lamp. And then the brush was given, and then the tint was placed ; and, for one moment, the painter stood entranced before the work which he had wrought ; but in the next, while he yet gazed, he grew tremulous and very pallid, and aghast, and crying with a loud voice, 'This is indeed *Life* itself !' turned suddenly to regard his beloved :—*She was dead !*"

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE TELL-TALE HEART

TRUE!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily, how calmly, I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye for ever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen *me*. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh, so gently! And then when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha!—would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And

this I did for seven long nights—every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed ; and so it was impossible to do the work ; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute-hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I *felt* the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea ; and perhaps he heard me ; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back—but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers), and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in the bed, crying out—"Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed, listening ;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death-watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no !—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself—"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or, "it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions : but he had found all in vain. *All in vain* ; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the

victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel,—although he neither saw nor heard—to *feel* the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell upon the vulture eye.

It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray, as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And now have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses?—now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew *that* sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now, at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer, I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbour! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once—once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the

body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye—not even *his*—could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out—no stain of any kind—no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all—ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labours, it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart,—for what had I *now* to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbour during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled—for *what* had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search—search *well*. I led them, at length, to *his* chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them *here* to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My *manner* had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct:—it continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definitiveness—until, at length, I found that the noise was *not* within my ears.

No doubt I now grew *very* pale;—but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was a *low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*. I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why *would* they not be gone? I paced the floor to

and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men—but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what *could* I do? I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—*louder!* And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they *knew!*—they were making a mockery of my horror!—this I thought, and this I think. But **anything** was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die!—and now—again! hark! louder! louder! louder! *louder!*—

“Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks!—here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!”

EDGAR ALLAN POE

ELEONORA

I AM come of a race noted for vigour of fancy and ardour of passion. Men have called me mad, but the question is not yet settled whether madness is or is not the loftiest intelligence, whether much that is glorious, whether all that is profound, does not spring from disease of thought, from *moods* of mind exalted at the expense of the general intellect. They who dream by day are cognisant of many things which escape those who dream only by night. In their grey visions they obtain glimpses of eternity, and thrill, in waking, to find that they have been upon the verge of the great secret. In snatches they learn something of the wisdom which is of good, and more of the mere knowledge which is of evil. They penetrate, however rudderless or compassless, into the vast ocean of the "light ineffable," and again, like the adventures of the Nubian geographer, "*agressi sunt mare tenebrarum, quid in eo esset exploraturi.*"

We will say, then, that I am mad. I grant, at least, that there are two distinct conditions of my mental existence, the condition of a lucid reason not to be disputed, and belonging to the memory of events forming the first epoch of my life, and a condition of shadow and doubt, appertaining to the present, and to the recollection of what constitutes the second great era of my being. Therefore, what I shall tell of the earlier period, believe; and to what I may relate of the later time, give only such credit as may seem due; or doubt it altogether; or, if doubt it ye cannot, then play unto its riddle the *Œdipus*.

She whom I loved in youth, and of whom I now pen calmly and distinctly these remembrances, was the sole daughter of the only sister of my mother long departed. Eleonora was the name of my cousin. We had always dwelt together, beneath a tropical sun, in the Valley of the Many-Coloured Grass. No unguided footstep ever came upon that vale, for it lay far away up among a range of giant hills that hung beetling around about it, shutting out the sunlight from its sweetest recesses. No path was trodden in its

vicinity ; and to reach our happy home there was need of putting back with force the foliage of many thousands of forest trees, and of crushing to death the glories of many millions of fragrant flowers. Thus it was that we lived all alone, knowing nothing of the world without the valley—I, and my cousin, and her mother.

From the dim regions beyond the mountains at the upper end of our encircled domain, there crept out a narrow and deep river, brighter than all save the eyes of Eleonora ; and winding stealthily about in mazy courses, it passed away at length through a shadowy gorge, among hills still dimmer than those whence it had issued. We called it the "River of Silence," for there seemed to be a hushing influence in its flow. No murmur arose from its bed, and so gently it wandered along that the pearly pebbles upon which we loved to gaze, far down within its bosom, stirred not at all, but lay in a motionless content, each in its own old station, shining on gloriously for ever.

The margin of the river, and of the many dazzling rivulets that glided through devious ways into its channel, as well as the spaces that extended from the margins away down into the depths of the streams until they reached the bed of pebbles at the bottom, these spots, not less than the whole surface of the valley, from the river to the mountains that girdled it in, were carpeted all by a soft green grass, thick, short, perfectly even, and vanilla-perfumed, but so besprinkled throughout with the yellow buttercup, the white daisy, the purple violet, and the ruby-red asphodel, that its exceeding beauty spoke to our hearts in loud tones of the love and of the glory of God.

And here and there, in groves about the grass, like wildernesses of dreams, sprang up fantastic trees, whose tall slender stems stood not upright, but slanted gracefully towards the light that peered at noonday into the centre of the valley. Their bark was speckled with the vivid alternate splendour of ebony and silver, and was smoother than all save the cheeks of Eleonora ; so that but for the brilliant green of the huge leaves that spread from their summits in long tremulous lines, dallying with the zephyrs, one might have fancied them giant serpents of Syria doing homage to their sovereign the sun.

Hand in hand about this valley, for fifteen years, roamed I with Eleonora before love entered within our hearts. It was one evening at the close of the third lustrum of her life, and of the fourth of my own, that we sat locked in each other's embrace, beneath the serpent-like trees, and looked down within the waters of the River of Silence at our images therein. We spoke no words during the rest of that sweet day, and our words even upon the morrow were

tremulous and few. We had drawn the god Eros from that wave, and now we felt that he had enkindled within us the fiery souls of our forefathers. The passions which had for centuries distinguished our race came thronging with the fancies for which they had been equally noted, and together breathed a delirious bliss over the Valley of the Many-Coloured Grass. A change fell upon all things. Strange, brilliant flowers, star-shaped, burst out upon the trees where no flowers had been known before. The tints of the green carpet deepened, and when, one by one, the white daisies shrank away, there sprang up in place of them, ten by ten of the ruby-red asphodel. And life arose in our paths, for the tall flamingo, hitherto unseen, with all gay glowing birds, flaunted his scarlet plumage before us. The golden and silver fish haunted the river, out of the bosom of which issued, little by little a murmur that swelled at length into a lulling melody more divine than that of the harp of Æolus, sweeter than all save the voice of Eleonora. And now, too, a voluminous cloud, which we had long watched in the regions of Hesper, floated out thence, all gorgeous in crimson and gold, and settling in peace above us, sank day by day lower and lower until its edges rested upon the tops of the mountains, turning all their dimness into magnificence, and shutting us up as if for ever within a magic prison-house of grandeur and of glory.

The loveliness of Eleonora was that of the Seraphim ; but she was a maiden artless and innocent as the brief life she had led among the flowers. No guile disguised the fervour of love which animated her heart, and she examined with me its inmost recesses as we walked together in the Valley of the Many-Coloured Grass, and discoursed of the mighty changes which had lately taken place therein.

At length, having spoken one day, in tears, of the last sad change which must befall humanity, she thenceforward dwelt only upon this one sorrowful theme, interweaving it into all our converse, as in the songs of the bard of Schiraz, the same images are found occurring again and again in every impressive variation of phrase.

She had seen that the finger of Death was upon her bosom—that, like the ephemeron, she had been made perfect in loveliness only to die ; but the terrors of the grave to her lay solely in a consideration which she revealed to me one evening at twilight by the banks of the River of Silence. She grieved to think that, having entombed her in the Valley of the Many-Coloured Grass, I would quit for ever its happy recesses, transferring the love which now was so passionately her own to some maiden of the outer and every-day world. And then and there I threw myself hurriedly at the feet of Eleonora, and offered up a vow to herself and to Heaven, that

I would never bind myself in marriage to any daughter of Earth—that I would in no manner prove recreant to her dear memory, or to the memory of the devout affection with which she had blessed me. And I called the Mighty Ruler of the Universe to witness the pious solemnity of my vow. And the curse which I invoked of *Him* and of her, a saint in Elusion, should I prove traitorous to that promise, involved a penalty the exceeding great horror of which will not permit me to make record of it here. And the bright eyes of Eleonora grew brighter at my words; and she sighed as if a deadly burthen had been taken from her breast; and she trembled and very bitterly wept; but she made acceptance of the vow (for what was she but a child?), and it made easy to her the bed of her death. And she said to me, not many days afterwards, tranquilly dying, that, because of what I had done for the comfort of her spirit, she would watch over me in that spirit when departed, and, if so it were permitted her, return to me visibly in the watches of the night; but, if this thing were indeed beyond the power of the souls in Paradise, that she would at least give me frequent indications of her presence; sighing upon me in the evening winds, or filling the air which breathed with perfume from the censers of the angels. And, with these words upon her lips, she yielded up her innocent life, putting an end to the first epoch of my own.

Thus far I have faithfully said. But as I pass the barrier in Time's path, formed by the death of my beloved, and proceed with the second era of my existence, I feel that a shadow gathers over my brain, and I mistrust the perfect sanity of the record. But let me on.—Years dragged themselves along heavily, and still I dwelled within the Valley of the Many-Coloured Grass; but a second change had come upon all things. The star-shaped flowers shrank into the stems of the trees, and appeared no more. The tints of the green carpet faded; and, one by one, the ruby-red asphodels withered away; and there sprang up, in place of them, ten by ten, dark, eye-like violets, that writhed uneasily and were ever encumbered with dew. And Life departed from our paths; for the tall flamingo flaunted no longer his scarlet plumage before us, but flew sadly from the vale into the hills, with all the gay glowing birds that had arrived in his company. And the golden and silver fish swam down through the gorge at the lower end of our domain, and bedecked the sweet river never again. And the lulling melody that had been softer than the wind-harp of Æolus, and more divine than all save the voice of Eleonora, it died little by little away, in murmurs growing lower and lower, until the stream returned, at length, utterly into the solemnity of its original silence; and then, lastly, the voluminous cloud arose, and,

abandoning the tops of the mountains to the dimness of old, fell back into the regions of Hesper, and took away all its manifold golden and gorgeous glories from the Valley of the Many-Coloured Grass.

Yet the promises of Eleonora were not forgotten ; for I heard the sounds of the swinging of the censers of the angels ; and streams of a holy perfume floated ever and ever about the valley ; and at lone hours, when my heart beat heavily, the winds that bathed my brow came unto me laden with soft sighs ; and indistinct murmurs filled often the night air ; and once—oh, but once only ! I was awakened from a slumber, like the slumber of death, by the pressing of spiritual lips upon my own.

But the void within my heart refused, even thus, to be filled. I longed for the love which had before filled it to overflowing. At length the valley *pained* me through its memories of Eleonora, and I left it for ever for the vanities and the turbulent triumphs of the world.

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I found myself within a strange city, where all things might have served to blot from recollection the sweet dreams I had dreamed so long in the Valley of the Many-Coloured Grass. The pomps and pageantries of a stately court, and the mad clangour of arms, and the radiant loveliness of woman, bewildered and intoxicated my brain. But as yet my soul had proved true to its vows, and the indications of the presence of Eleonora were still given me in the silent hours of the night. Suddenly, these manifestations ceased ; and the world grew dark before mine eyes ; and I stood aghast at the burning thoughts which possessed—at the terrible temptations which beset me ; for there came from some far, far distant and unknown land, into the gay court of the king I served, a maiden to whose beauty my whole recreant heart yielded at once—at whose footstool I bowed down without a struggle in the most ardent, in the most abject worship of love. What indeed was my passion for the young girl of the valley in comparison with the fervour and the delirium, and the spirit-lifting ecstasy of adoration with which I poured out my whole soul in tears at the feet of the ethereal Ermengarde ?—Oh, bright as the seraph Ermengarde ! and in that knowledge I had room for none other.—Oh, divine was the angel Ermengarde ! and as I looked down into the depths of her memorial eyes, I thought only of them—and of *her*.

I wedded ;—nor dreaded the curse I had invoked ; and its bitterness was not visited upon me. And once—but once again in the silence of the night, there came through my lattice the soft

sighs which had forsaken me ; and they modelled themselves into familiar and sweet voice, saying—

“ Sleep in peace !—for the Spirit of Love reigneth and ruleth, and, in taking to thy passionate heart her who is Ermengarde, thou art absolved, for reasons which shall be made known to thee in Heaven, of thy vows unto Eleonora.”

EDGAR ALLAN POE

SHADOW—A PARABLE

Yea ! though I walk through the valley of the *Shadow*.
Psalm of David.

YE who read are still among the living ; but I who write shall have long since gone my way into the region of shadows. For indeed strange things shall happen, and secret things be known, and many centuries shall pass away, ere these memorials be seen of men. And, when seen, there will be some to disbelieve, and some to doubt, and yet a few who will find much to ponder upon in the characters here graven with a stylus of iron.

The year had been a year of terror, and of feelings more intense than terror, for which there is no name upon the earth. For many prodigies and signs had taken place, and far and wide, over sea and land, the black wings of the pestilence were spread abroad. To those, nevertheless, cunning in the stars, it was not unknown that the heavens wore an aspect of ill ; and to me, the Greek Oinos, among others, it was evident that now had arrived the alternation of that seven hundred and ninety-fourth year when, at the entrance of Aries, the planet Jupiter is conjoined with the red ring of the terrible Saturnus. The peculiar spirit of the skies, if I mistake not greatly, made itself manifest not only in the physical orb of the earth, but in the souls, imaginations, and meditations of mankind.

Over some flasks of the red Chian wine, within the walls of a noble hall, in a dim city called Ptolemais, we sat, at night, a company of seven. And to our chamber there was no entrance save by a lofty door of brass ; and the door was fashioned by the artisan Corinnos, and, being of rare workmanship, was fastened from within. Black draperies, likewise, in the gloomy room, shut out from our view the moon, the lurid stars, and the peopleless streets—but the boding and the memory of Evil, they would not be so excluded. There were things around us and about of which I can render no distinct account—things material and spiritual—heaviness in the atmosphere—a sense of suffocation—anxiety—and, above all, that

terrible state of existence which the nervous experience when the senses are keenly living and awake, and meanwhile the powers of thought lie dormant. A dead weight hung upon us. It hung upon our limbs—upon the household furniture—upon the goblets from which we drank; and all things were depressed, and borne down thereby—all things save only the flames of the seven iron lamps which illuminated our revel. Uprearing themselves in tall slender lines of light, they thus remained burning, all pallid and motionless; and in the mirror which their lustre formed upon the round table of ebony at which we sat, each of us there assembled beheld the pallor of his own countenance, and the unquiet glare in the downcast eyes of his companions. Yet we laughed and were merry in our proper way—which was hysterical; and sang the songs of Anacreon—which are madness; and drank deeply—although the purple wine reminded us of blood. For there was yet another tenant of our chamber in the person of young Zoilus. Dead, and at full length he lay, enshrouded—the genius and the demon of the scene. Alas! he bore no portion in our mirth, save that his countenance, distorted with the plague, and his eyes, in which death had but half extinguished the fire of the pestilence, seemed to take such interest in our merriment as the dead may haply take in the merriment of those who are to die. But, although I, Oinos, felt that the eyes of the departed were upon me, still I forced myself not to perceive the bitterness of their expression, and, gazing down steadily into the depths of the ebony mirror, sang with a loud and sonorous voice the songs of the son of Teios. But gradually my songs they ceased, and their echoes, rolling afar off among the sable draperies of the chamber, became weak, and undistinguishable, and so faded away. And lo! from among those sable draperies, where the sounds of the song departed, there came forth a dark and undefined shadow—a shadow such as the moon, when low in heaven, might fashion from the figure of a man: but it was the shadow neither of man nor of God, nor of any familiar thing. And quivering awhile among the draperies of the room, it at length rested in full view upon the surface of the door of brass. But the shadow was vague, and formless, and indefinite, and was the shadow neither of man nor God—neither God of Greece, nor God of Chaldea, nor any Egyptian God. And the shadow rested upon the brazen doorway, and under the arch of the entablature of the door, and moved not, nor spoke any word, but there became stationary and remained. And the door whereupon the shadow rested was, if I remember aright, over against the feet of the young Zoilus enshrouded. But we, the seven, there assembled, having seen the shadow as it came out from among the draperies, dared not steadily behold it, but cast down our eyes, and gazed continually

into the depths of the mirror of ebony. And at length I, Oinos, speaking some low words, demanded of the shadow its dwelling and its appellation. And the shadow answered, "I am SHADOW, and my dwelling is near to the catacombs of Ptolemais, and hard by those dim plains of Elusion which border upon the foul Charonian canal." And then did we, the seven, start from our seats in horror, and stand trembling, and shuddering, and aghast; for the tones in the voice of the shadow were not the tones of any one being, but of a multitude of beings, and, varying in their cadences from syllable to syllable, fell duskily upon our ears in the well-remembered and familiar accents of many thousand departed friends.

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

1812-1896

THE MINISTER'S WOOING

"WAL, the upshot on't was, they fussed and fuzzled and wuzzled till they'd drank up all the tea in the teapot; and then they went down and called on the parson, and wuzzled him all up talkin' about this, that, and t'other that wanted lookin' to, and that it was in no way to leave everything to a young chit like Huldy, and that he ought to be lookin' about for an experienced woman.

"The parson, he thanked 'em kindly, and said he believed their motives was good, but he didn't go no further.

"He didn't ask Mis' Pipperidge to come and stay there and help him, nor nothin' o' that kind; but he said he'd attend to matters himself. The fact was, the parson had got such a likin' for havin' Huldy 'round, that he couldn't think o' such a thing as swappin' her off for the Widder Pipperidge.

"'But,' he thought to himself, 'Huldy is a good girl; but I oughtn't to be a-leavin' everything to her—it's too hard on her. I ought to be instructin' and guidin' and helpin' of her; 'cause 'tain't everybody could be expected to know and do what Mis' Carryl did'; and so at it he went; and Lord massy! didn't Huldy hev a time on't when the minister began to come out of his study, and wanted to ten 'round and see to things? Huldy, you see, thought all the world of the minister, and she was 'most afraid to laugh; but she told me she couldn't, for the life of her, help it when his back was turned, for he wuzzled things up in the most singular way. But Huldy, she'd jest say, 'Yes, sir,' and get him off into his study, and go on her own way.

"'Huldy,' says the minister one day, 'you ain't experienced out doors; and when you want to know anything, you must come to me.'

"'Yes, sir,' said Huldy.

"'Now, Huldy,' says the parson, 'you must be sure to save the turkey eggs, so that we can have a lot of turkeys for Thanksgiving.'

“ ‘Yes, sir,’ says Huldy ; and she opened the pantry door, and showed him a nice dishful she’d been a-savin’ up. Wal, the very next day the parson’s hen-turkey was found killed up to old Jim Scroggs’s barn. Folks say Scroggs killed it ; though Scroggs, he stood to it he didn’t ; at any rate, the Scroggses, they made a meal on’t, and Huldy, she felt bad about it ’cause she’d set her heart on raisin’ the turkeys ; and says she, ‘ Oh, dear ! I don’t know what I shall do, I was just ready to set her.’ ”

“ ‘Do, Huldy ?’ says the parson : ‘ why, there’s the other turkey, out there by the door ; and a fine bird, too, he is.’ ”

“ ‘Sure enough, there was the old tom-turkey a-struttin’ and a-sidlin’, and a-quitterin’, and a-floutin’ his tail feathers in the sun, like a lively young widower, all ready to begin life over again.’ ”

“ ‘But,’ says Huldy, ‘ you know *he* can’t set on eggs.’ ”

“ ‘He can’t ? I’d like to know why,’ says the parson. ‘ He *shall* set on eggs, and hatch ’em too.’ ”

“ ‘Oh, doctor !’ says Huldy, all in a tremble ; ‘ cause, you know, she didn’t want to contradict the minister, and she was afraid she should laugh—’ I never heard that a tom-turkey would set on eggs.’ ”

“ ‘Why, they ought to,’ said the parson, getting quite ’arnest. ‘ What else be they good for ? You just bring out the eggs, now, and put ’em in the nest, and I’ll make him set on ’em.’ ”

“ So, Huldy, she thought there weren’t no way to convince him but to let him try : so she took the eggs out, and fixed ’em all nice in the nest ; and then she come back and found old Tom a-skirmishin’ with the parson pretty lively, I tell ye. Ye see, old Tom, he didn’t take the idee at all ; and he flopped and gobbled, and fit the parson : and the parson’s wig got ’round so that his cue stuck straight out over his ear, but he’d got his blood up. Ye see, the old doctor was used to carryin’ his p’int o’ doctrine ; and he hadn’t fit the Arminians and Socinians to be beat by a tom-turkey ; and finally he made a dive and ketched him by the neck in spite o’ his floppin’, and stroked him down, and put Huldy’s apron ’round him. ”

“ ‘There, Huldy,’ he says, quite red in the face, ‘ we’ve got him now ’ ; and he travelled off to the barn with him as lively as a cricket. ”

“ ‘Huldy came behind, just chokin’ with laugh, and afraid the minister would look ’round and see her. ”

“ ‘Now, Huldy, we’ll crook his legs, and set him down,’ says the parson, when they got him to the nest ; ‘ you see he is getting quiet, and he’ll set there all right.’ ”

“ And the parson, he sot him down ; and old Tom, he sot there

solemn enough and held his head down all droopin', lookin' like a rail pious old cock, as long as the parson sot by him.

" 'There : you see how still he sets,' says the parson to Huldy.

" Huldy was 'most dyin' for fears she should laugh. 'I'm afraid he'll get up,' says she, 'when you do.'

" 'Oh no, he won't !' says the parson, quite confident. 'There, there,' says he, layin' his hands on him as if pronouncin' a blessin'.

" But when the parson riz up, old Tom, he riz up too, and began to march over the eggs.

" 'Stop, now !' says the parson. 'I'll make him get down agin ; hand me that corn-basket ; we'll put that over him.'

" So he crooked old Tom's legs, and got him down agin ; and they put the corn-basket over him, and then they both stood and waited.

" 'That'll do the thing, Huldy,' said the parson.

" 'I don't know about it,' says Huldy.

" 'Oh yes, it will, child ; I understand,' says he.

" Just as he spoke, the basket riz up and stood, and they could see old Tom's long legs.

" 'I'll make him stay down, confound him,' says the parson, for you see, parsons is men like the rest on us, and the doctor had got his spunk up.

" 'You jist hold him a minute, and I'll get something that'll make him stay, I guess' ; and out he went to the fence, and brought in a long, thin, flat stone, and laid it on old Tom's back.

" 'Oh, my eggs !' says Huldy. 'I'm afraid he's smashed 'em !'

" And sure enough, there they was, smashed flat enough under the stone.

" 'I'll have him killed,' said the parson. 'We won't have such a critter 'round.'

" Wal, next week, Huldy, she jist borrowed the minister's horse and side-saddle, and rode over to South Parish to her Aunt Bascome's,—Widder Bascome's, you know, that lives there by the trout-brook,—and got a lot o' turkey-eggs o' her, and come back and set a hen on 'em, and said nothin' ; and in good time there was as nice a lot o' turkey-chicks as ever ye see.

" Huldy never said a word to the minister about his experiment, and he never said a word to her ; but he sort o' kep' more to his books, and didn't take it on him to advise so much.

" But not long arter he took it into his head that Huldy ought to have a pig to be a-fattin' with the buttermilk.

" Mis' Pipperidge set him up to it ; and jist then old Tom Bigelow, out to Juniper Hill, told him if he'd call over he'd give him a little pig.

" So he sent for a man, and told him to build a pig-pen right

out by the well, and have it all ready when he came home with his pig.

"Huldy said she wished he might put a curb round the well out there, because, in the dark sometimes, a body might stumble into it; and the parson said he might do that.

"Wal, old Aikin, the carpenter, he didn't come till 'most the middle of the arternoon; and then he sort o' idled, so that he didn't get up the well-curb till sundown; and then he went off, and said he'd come and do the pig-pen next day.

"Wal, arter dark, Parson Carryl, he driv into the yard, full chizel, with his pig.

"'There, Huldy, I've got you a nice little pig.'

"'Dear me!' says Huldy; 'where have you put him?'

"'Why, out there in the pig-pen, to be sure.'

"'Oh, dear me!' says Huldy, 'that's the well-curb—there ain't no pig-pen built,' says she.

"'Lordy massy!' says the parson; 'then I've thrown the pig in the well!'

"Wal, Huldy, she worked and worked, and finally she fished piggy out in the bucket, but he was as dead as a door-nail; and she got him out o' the way quietly, and didn't say much; and the parson he took to a great Hebrew book in his study.

"Arter that the parson set sich store by Huldy that he come to her and asked her about everything, and it was amazin' how everything she put her hand to prospered. Huldy planted marigolds and larkspurs, pinks and carnations, all up and down the path to the front door; and trained up mornin' glories and scarlet runners round the windows. And she was always gettin' a root here, and a sprig there, and a seed from somebody else; for Huldy was one o' them that has the gift, so that ef you jist give 'em the leastest of anything they make a great bush out of it right away; so that in six months Huldy had roses and geraniums and lilies, sich as it would take a gardener to raise.

"Huldy was so sort o' chipper and fair spoken, that she got the hired men all under her thumb: they come to her and took her orders jist as meek as so many calves; and she traded at the store, and kep' the accounts, and she had her eyes everywhere, and tied up all the ends so tight that there wa'n't no gettin' round' her. She wouldn't let nobody put nothin' off on Parson Carryl 'cause he was a minister. Huldy was allers up to anybody that wanted to make a hard bargain, and, afore he knew jist what he was about, she'd got the best end of it, and everybody said that Huldy was the most capable girl they ever traded with.

"Wal, come to the meetin' of the Association, Mis' Deakin Blodgett and Mis' Pipperridge come callin' up to the parson's all

in a stew, and offerin' their services to get the house ready, but the doctor, he jist thanked 'em quite quiet, and turned 'em over to Huldý; and Huldý she told 'em that she'd got everything ready, and showed 'em her pantries, and her cakes, and her pies, and her puddin's, and took 'em all over the house; and they went peekin' and pokin', openin' cupboard doors, and lookin' into drawers; and they couldn't find so much as a thread out o' the way, from garret to cellar, and so they went off quite discontented. Arter that the women set a new trouble a-brewin'. They begun to talk that it was a year now since Mis' Carryl died; and it r'ally wasn't proper such a young gal to be stayin' there, who everybody could see was a-settin' her cap for the minister.

"Mis' Pipperidge said, that so long as she looked on Huldý as the hired gal, she hadn't thought much about it; but Huldý was railly takin' on airs as an equal, and appearin' as mistress o' the house in a way that would make talk if it went on. And Mis' Pipperidge she driv' 'round up to Deakin Abner Snow's, and down to Mis' 'Lijah Perry's, and asked them if they wasn't afraid that the way the parson and Huldý was a-goin' on might make talk. And they said they hadn't thought on't before, but now, come to think on't, they was sure it would; and they all went and talked with somebody else, and asked them if they didn't think it would make talk. So come Sunday, between meetin's, there warn't nothin' else talked about; and Huldý saw folks a-noddin' and a-winkin', and a-lookin' arter her, and she begun to feel drefful sort o' disagreeable. Finally Mis' Sawin, she says to her, 'My dear, didn't you never think folk would talk about you and the minister?'

"'No; why should they?' says Huldý, quite innocent.

"'Wal, dear,' says she, 'I think it's a shame; but they say you're tryin' to catch him, and that it's so bold and improper for you to be courtin' of him right in his own house,—you know folks will talk,—I thought I'd tell you, 'cause I think so much of you,' says she.

"Huldý was a gal of spirit, and she despised the talk, but it made her drefful uncomfortable; and when she got home at night she sat down in the mornin'-glory porch, quite quiet, and didn't sing a word.

"The minister he had heard the same thing from one of his deakins that day; and when he saw Huldý so kind o' silent, he says to her, 'Why don't you sing, my child?'

"He hed a pleasant sort o' way with him, the minister had, and Huldý had got to likin' to be with him; and it all come over her that perhaps she ought to go away; and her throat kind o' filled up so she couldn't hardly speak; and, says she, 'I can't sing to-night.'

"Says he, 'You don't know how much good your singin' has done me, nor how much good you have done me in all ways, Huldy. I wish I knew how to show my gratitude.'

"'Oh, sir!' says Huldy, 'is it improper for me to be here?'

"'No, dear,' says the minister, 'but ill-natured folks will talk; but there is one way we can stop it, Huldy—if you'll marry me. You'll make me very happy, and I'll do all I can to make you happy. Will you?'

"Wal, Huldy never told me just what she said to the minister; gals never does give you the particulars of them 'are things jist as you'd like 'em—only I know the upshot, and the hull on't was, that Huldy she did a consid'able lot o' clear starchin' and ironin' the next two days; and the Friday o' next week the minister and she rode over together to Dr. Lothrop's, in Oldtown; and the doctor, he jist made 'em man and wife."

CHRISTOPHER PEARSE CRANCH
1813-1892

A MUSICAL ENIGMA

ONE chilly, windy evening in the month of December 1831, three young men sat around a tall office-stove in Mr. Simon Shrowdwell's establishment, No. 307 Dyer Street, in the town of Boggsville.

Mr. Simon Shrowdwell was a model undertaker, about fifty years of age, and the most exemplary and polite of sextons in the old Dutch church just round the corner. He was a musical man, too, and led the choir, and sang in the choruses of oratorios that were sometimes given in the town-hall. He was a smooth-shaven, sleek man, dressed in decorous black, wore a white cravat, and looked not unlike a second-hand copy of the clergyman. He had the fixed, pleasant expression customary to a profession whose business it was to look sympathetic on grief, especially in rich men's houses.

Still it was a kind expression; and the rest of his features indicated that he did not lack firmness in emergencies. During the cholera season of the year aforesaid he had done a thriving business, and had considerably enlarged his store and his supply of ready-made mortuary furnishings. His rooms were spacious and neat. Rows of handsome coffins, of various sizes, stood around the walls in shining array, some of them studded with silver-headed nails; and everything about the establishment looked as cheerful as the nature of his business permitted.

On this December evening Mr. Shrowdwell and his wife, whose quarters were on the floor above, happened to be out visiting some friends. His young man, William Spindles, and two of his friends who had come in to keep him company, sat by the ruddy stove, smoking their pipes, and chatting as cheerily as if these cases for the dead that surrounded them were simple ornamental panels. Gas, at that time, hadn't been introduced into the town of Boggsville; but a cheerful argand-lamp did its best to light up the shop.

Their talk was gay and airy, about all sorts of small matters; and people who passed the street-window looked in and smiled to see the contrast between the social smoking and chatting of these youngsters, and the grim but neat proprieties of their environment.

One of the young men had smoked out his pipe, and rapped it three times on the stove, to knock out the ashes.

There was an answering knocking—somewhere near; but it didn't seem to come from the street-door. They were a little startled, and Spindles called out:

"Come in!"

Again came the rapping, in another part of the room.

"Come in!" roared Spindles, getting up and laying his pipe down.

The street-door slowly opened, and in glided a tall, thin man. He was a stranger. He wore a tall, broad-brimmed hat, and a long, dark, old-fashioned cloak. His eyes were sunken, his face cadaverous, his hands long and bony.

He came forward. "I wish to see Mr. Shrowdwell."

"He is out," said Spindles. "Can I do anything for you?"

"I would rather see Mr. Shrowdwell," said the stranger.

"He will not be home till late this evening. If you have any message, I can deliver it; or you will find him here in the morning."

The stranger hesitated. "Perhaps you can do it as well as Shrowdwell. . . . I want a coffin."

"All right," said Spindles; "step this way, please. Is it for a grown person or a child? Perhaps you can find something here that will suit you. For some relative, I presume?"

"No, no, no! I have no relatives," said the stranger. Then in a hoarse whisper, "*It's for myself!*"

Spindles started back, and looked at his friends. He had been used to customers ordering coffins; but this was something new. He looked hard at the pale stranger. A queer, uncomfortable chill crept over him. As he glanced around, the lamp seemed to be burning very dimly.

"You don't mean to say you are in earnest?" he stammered. And yet, he thought, this isn't a business to joke about. . . . He looked at the mysterious stranger again, and said to himself: "Perhaps he's deranged—poor man!"

Meanwhile the visitor was looking around at the rows of coffins shining gloomily in the lamplight. But he soon turned about, and said:

"These won't do. They are not the right shape or size. . . . *You must measure me for one!*"

"You don't mean——" gasped Spindles. "Come, this is carrying a joke too far."

"I am not joking," said the stranger; "I never joke. I want you to take my measure. . . . And I want it made of a particular shape."

Spindles looked toward the stove. His companions had heard

part of the conversation, and, gazing nervously at each other, they had put on their hats and overcoats, pocketed their pipes, and taken French leave.

Spindles found himself alone with the cadaverous stranger, and feeling very queer. He began to say that the gentleman had better come in the morning, when Mr. Shrowdwell was in—Shrowdwell understood this business. But the stranger fixed his cold black eyes upon him, and whispered :

"I can't wait. *You* must do it—to-night. . . . Come, take my measure ! "

Spindles was held by a sort of fascination, and mechanically set about taking his measure, as a tailor would have done for a coat and trousers.

"Have you finished ? " said the stranger.

"Y—y—es, sir ; that will do," said Spindles. "What name did you say, sir ? "

"No matter about my name. I have no name. Yet I might have had one, if the fates had permitted. Now for the style of the coffin I want."

And taking a pencil and card from his pocket, he made a rough draught of what he wanted. And the lines of the drawing appeared to burn in the dark like phosphorus.

"I must have a lid and hinges—so, you see—and a lock *on the inside*, and plenty of room for my arms."

"All r—r—right," said Spindles ; "we'll make it. But it's not exactly in our line—to m—m—ake co—co—coffins in this style." And the youth stared at the drawing. It was for all the world like a violoncello-case.

"When can I have it ? " said the stranger, paying no attention to Spindles' remark.

"Day after to-morrow, I sup—p—ose. But I—will have to—ask Shrowdwell—about it."

"I want it three days from now. I'll call for it about this time Friday evening. But as you don't know me, I'll pay in advance. This will cover all expenses, I think," producing a bank-note.

"Certainly," stammered Spindles.

"I want you to be particular about the lid and the locks. I was buried once before, you see ; and this time I want to have my own way. I have one coffin, but it's too small for me. I keep it under my bed, and use it for a trunk. Good evening. Friday night—remember ! "

Spindles thought there would be little danger of his forgetting it. But he didn't relish the idea of seeing him again, especially at night. "However, Shrowdwell will be here then," he said.

When the mysterious stranger had gone, Spindles put the bank-

bill in his pocket-book, paced up and down, looked out of the window, and wished Shrowdwell would come home.

"After all," he said, "it's only a crazy man. And yet what made the lamp burn so dim? And what strange raps those were before he entered! And that drawing with a phosphoric pencil! And how like a dead man he looked! Pshaw! I'll smoke another pipe."

And he sat down by the stove, with his back to the coffins. At last the town-clock struck nine, and he shut up the shop, glad to get away and go home.

Next morning he told Shrowdwell the story, handed him the bank-bill as corroboration, and showed him the drawing, the lines of which were very faint by daylight. Shrowdwell took the money gleefully, and locked it in his safe.

"What do you think of this affair, Mr. Shrowdwell?" Spindles asked.

"This is some poor deranged gentleman, Spindles. I have made coffins for deranged men—but this is something unusual—ha! ha!—for a man to come and order his own coffin, and be measured for it! This is a new and interesting case, Spindles—one that I think has never come within my experience. But let me see that drawing again. How faint it is. I must put on my specs. Why, it is nothing but a big fiddle-case—a double-bass box. He's probably some poor distracted musician, and has taken this strange fancy into his head—perhaps imagines himself a big fiddle—eh, Spindles?" And he laughed softly at his own conceit. "'Pon my soul, this is a queer case—and a fiddle-case, too—ha! ha! But we must set about fulfilling his order."

By Friday noon the coffin of the new pattern was finished. All the workmen were mystified about it, and nearly all cracked jokes at its queer shape. But Spindles was very grave. As the hour approached when the stranger was to call for it he became more and more agitated. He would have liked to be away, and yet his curiosity got the better of his nervousness. He asked his two friends to come in, and they agreed to do so, on Spindles' promise to go first to an oyster-saloon and order something hot to fortify their courage. They didn't say anything about this to Shrowdwell, for he was a temperance man and a sexton.

They sat around the blazing stove, all four of them, waiting for the insane man to appear. It wanted a few minutes of eight.

"What's the matter with that lamp?" said Shrowdwell. "How dim it burns! It wants oil."

"I filled it to-day," said Spindles.

"I feel a chill all down my back," said Barker.

"And there's that rapping again," said O'Brien.

There *was* a rapping, as if underneath the floor. Then it seemed

to come from the coffins on the other side of the room ; then it was at the window-panes, and at last at the door. They all looked bewildered, and thought it very strange.

Presently the street-door opened slowly. They saw no one, but heard a deep sigh.

" Pshaw, it's only the wind," said Shrowdwell, and rose to shut the door—when right before them stood the cadaverous stranger. They were all so startled that not a word was spoken.

" I have come for my coffin," the stranger said, in a sepulchral whisper. " Is it done ? "

" Yes, sir," said Shrowdwell. " It's all ready. Where shall we send it ? "

" I take it with me," said the stranger in the same whisper. " Where is it ? "

" But it's too heavy for you to carry," said the undertaker.

" That's my affair," he answered.

" Well, of course you are the best judge whether you can carry it or not. But perhaps you have a cart outside, or a porter ? "

All this while the lamp had burned so dim that they couldn't see the features of the unknown. But suddenly, as he drew nearer, it flared up with a sudden blaze, as if possessed, and they saw that his face was like the face of a corpse. At the same instant an old cat which had been purring quietly by the stove—usually the most grave and decorous of tabbies—started up and glared, and then sprang to the farthest part of the room, her tail puffed out to twice its ordinary size.

They said nothing, but drew back and let him pass toward the strange-looking coffin. He glided toward it, and taking it under his arm, as if it were no heavier than a small basket, moved toward the door, which seemed to open of its own accord, and he vanished into the street.

" Let's follow him," said the undertaker, " and see where he's going. You know I don't believe in ghosts. I've seen too many dead bodies for that. This is some crazy gentleman, depend on it ; and we ought to see that he doesn't do himself any harm. Come ! "

The three young men didn't like the idea of following this stranger in the dark, whether he were living or dead. And yet they liked no better being left in the dimly-lighted room among the coffins. So they all sallied out, and caught a glimpse of the visitor just turning the corner.

They walked quickly in that direction.

" He's going to the church," said Spindles. " No, he's turning toward the graveyard. See, he has gone right through the iron gate ! And yet it was locked ! He has disappeared among the trees ! "

" We'll wait here at this corner, and watch," said Shrowdwell.

They waited fifteen or twenty minutes, but saw no more of him. They then advanced and peered through the iron railings of the cemetery. The moon was hidden in clouds, which drifted in great masses across the sky, into which rose the tall, dim church-steeple. The wind blew drearily among the leafless trees of the burial-ground. They thought they saw a dark figure moving down toward the north-west corner. Then they heard some of the vault-doors creak open and shut with a heavy thud.

"Those are the tombs of the musicians," whispered the undertaker. "I have seen several of our Handel-and-Haydn Society buried there—two of them, you remember, were taken off by cholera last summer. Ah, well, in the midst of life we are in death; we none of us know when we shall be taken. I have a lot there myself, and expect to lay my bones in it some day."

Presently strange sounds were heard, seeming to come from the corner spoken of. They were like the confused tuning of an orchestra before a concert—with discords and chromatic runs, up and down, from at least twenty instruments, but all muffled and pent in, as if under ground.

Yet, thought the undertaker, this may be only the wind in the trees. "I wish the moon would come out," he said, "so we could see something. Anyhow, I think it's a Christian duty to go in there, and see after that poor man. He may have taken a notion, you know, to shut himself up in his big fiddle-case, and we ought to see that he don't do himself any injury. Come, will you go?"

"Not I, thank you—nor I—nor I," said they all. "We are going home—we've had enough of this."

"Very well," said the undertaker. "As you please; I'll go alone."

Mr. Shrowdwell was a veritable Sadducee. He believed in death firmly. The only resurrection he acknowledged was the resurrection of a tangible body at some far-off judgment-day. He had no fear of ghosts. But this was not so much a matter of reasoning with him, as temperament, and the constant contact with lifeless bodies.

"When a man's dead," said Shrowdwell, "he's dead, I take it. I never see a man or woman come to life again. Don't the Scriptures say, 'Dust to dust'? It's true that with the Lord nothing is impossible, and at the last day He will summon His elect to meet Him in the clouds; but that's a mystery."

And yet he couldn't account for this mysterious visitor passing through the tall iron railings of the gate—if he really *did* pass—for after all it may have been an ocular illusion.

But he determined to go in and see what he could see. He had the key of the cemetery in his pocket. He opened the iron gate and passed in, while the other men stood at a distance. They knew the

sexton was proof against spirits of all sorts, airy or liquid ; and after waiting a little, they concluded to go home, for the night was cold and dreary—and ghost or no ghost, they couldn't do much good there.

As Shrowdwell approached the north-west corner of the graveyard, he heard those singular musical sounds again. They seemed to come from the vaults and graves, but they mingled so with the rush and moaning of the wind, that he still thought he might be mistaken.

In the farthest corner there stood a large old family vault. It had belonged to a family with an Italian name, the last member of which had been buried there many years ago—and since then had not been opened. The vines and shrubbery had grown around and over it, partly concealing it.

As he approached it, Shrowdwell observed with amazement that the door was open, and a dense phosphorescent light lit up the interior.

"Oh," he said, "the poor insane gentleman has contrived somehow to get a key to this vault, and has gone in there to commit suicide, and bury himself in his queer coffin—and save the expense of having an undertaker. I must save him, if possible, from such a fate."

As he stood deliberating, he heard the musical sounds again. They came not only from the vaults, but from all around. There was the hoarse groaning of a double-bass, answered now and then by a low muffled wail of horns and a scream of flutes, mingled with the pathetic complainings of a violin. Shrowdwell began to think he was dreaming, and rubbed his eyes and his ears to see if he were awake. After considerable tuning and running up and down the scales, the instruments fell into an accompaniment to the double-bass in Beethoven's celebrated song—

"In questa temba oscura
Lasciarmi riposer !
Quando vivevo, ingrata,
Dovevi a me pensar.
Lascia che l'ombra ignade
Godansi in pace almer—
E non bagnar mie cenere
D'inutile vellen !"

The tone was as if the air were played on the harmonic intervals of the instrument, and yet was so weirdly and so wonderfully like a human voice, that Shrowdwell felt as if he had got into some enchanted circle. As the solo drew to its conclusion, the voice that seemed to be in it broke into sobs, and ended in a deep groan.

But the undertaker summoned up his courage, and determined to probe this mystery to the bottom. Coming nearer the vault and looking in, what should he see but the big musical coffin of the cadaverous stranger lying just inside the entrance of the tomb.

The undertaker was convinced that the strange gentleman was the performer of the solo. But where was the instrument? He mustered courage to speak, and was about to offer some comforting and encouraging words. But at the first wound of his voice the lid of the musical coffin, which had been open, slammed to, so suddenly that the sexton jumped back three feet, and came near tumbling over a tombstone behind him. At the same time the dim phosphorescent light in the vault was extinguished, and there was another groan from the double-bass in the coffin. The sexton determined to open the case. He stooped over it and listened. He thought he heard inside a sound like putting a key into a padlock.

"He mustn't lock himself in," he said, and instantly wrenched open the cover.

Immediately there was a noise like the snapping of strings and the cracking of light wood—then a strange sizzling sound—and then a loud explosion. And the undertaker lay senseless on the ground.

Mrs. Shrowdwell waited for her husband till a late hour, but he did not return. She grew very anxious, and at last determined to put on her bonnet and shawl and step over to Mr. Spindles' boarding-house to know where he could be. That young gentlemen was just about retiring, in a very nervous state, after having taken a strong nipper of brandy and water to restore his equanimity. Mrs. Shrowdwell stated her anxieties, and Spindles told her something of the occurrences of the evening. She then urged him to go at once to a police-station and obtain two or three of the town watchmen to visit the graveyard with lanterns and pistols; which, after some delay and demurring on the part of the guardians of the night, and a promise of a reward on the part of Mrs. Shrowdwell, they consented to do.

After some searching the watchmen found the vault, and in front of it poor Shrowdwell lying on his back in a senseless state. They sent for a physician, who administered some stimulants, and gradually brought him to his senses, and upon his legs. He couldn't give any clear account of the adventure. The vault door was closed, and the moonlight lay calm upon the white stones, and no sounds were heard but the wind, now softly purring among the pines and cedars.

They got him home, and, to his wife's joy, found him uninjured. He made light of the affair—told her of the bank-note he had received for the musical coffin, and soon fell soundly asleep.

Next morning he went to his iron safe to reassure himself about the

bank-note—for he had an uncanny dream about it. To his amazement and grief it was gone, and in its place was a piece of charred paper.

The undertaker lost himself in endless speculations about this strange adventure, and began to think there was diabolical witchcraft in the whole business, after all.

One day, however, looking over the parish record, he came upon some facts with regard to the Italian family who had owned that vault. On comparing these notes with the reminiscences of one or two of the older inhabitants of Boggsville, he made out something like the following history :

Signor Domerico Pietri, an Italian exile of noble family, had lived in that town some fifty years since. He was of an unsocial, morose disposition, and very proud. His income was small, and his only son Ludovico, who had decided musical talent, determined to seek his fortune in the larger cities, as a performer on the double-bass. It was said his execution on the *harmonic notes* was something marvellous. But his father opposed his course, either from motives of family pride, or wishing him to engage in commerce ; and one day, during an angry dispute with him, banished him from his house.

Very little was known of Ludovico Pietri. He lived a wandering life, and suffered from poverty. Finally all trace was lost of him. The old man died, and was buried, along with other relatives, in the Italian vault. The authorities of the Dutch church had permitted this, on Signor Domerico's renouncing Romanism, and joining the Protestants.

But there was a story told of a performer on the double-bass, who played such wild, passionate music, and with such skill, that in his lonely garret, one night, the devil appeared, and offered him a great bag of gold for his big fiddle—proposing at the same time that he should sign a contract that he would not play any more *during his lifetime*—except at his (the fiend's) bidding. The musician, being very poor, accepted the offer and signed the contract, and the devil vanished with his big fiddle. But afterward the poor musician repented the step he had taken, and took it so to heart that he became insane and died.

Now, whether this strange visitor to Mr. Shrowdwell's coffin establishment, who walked the earth in this unhappy frame of mind, was a live man, or the ghost of the poor maniac, was a question which could not be satisfactorily settled.

Some hopeless unbelievers said that the strange big fiddle-case was a box of nitro-glycerine or fulminating powder, or an infernal machine ; while others as firmly believed that there was something supernatural and uncanny about the affair, but ventured no philosophical theory in the case.

And as for the undertaker, he was such a hopeless sceptic all his life, that he at last came to the conclusion that he must have been dreaming when he had that adventure in the graveyard ; and this notwithstanding William Spindles' repeated declarations, and those of the two other young men (none of whom accompanied Shrowdwell in this visit), that everything happened just as I have related it.

JOSEPH G. BALDWIN
1815-1864

OVID BOLUS, ESQ.
ATTORNEY-AT-LAW, AND SOLICITOR IN
CHANCERY

A Fragment

AND what history of that halcyon period, ranging from the year of Grace 1835 to 1837 ; that golden era, when shin-plasters were the sole currency ; when bank-bills were

Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks
In Vallombrosa—

and credit was a franchise—what history of those times would be complete that left out the name of Ovid Bolus ? As well write the biography of Prince Hal, and forbear all mention of Falstaff. In law phrase, the thing would be a “ deed without a name,” and void ; a most unpardonable *casus omissus*.

I cannot trace, for reasons the sequel suggests, the early history, much less the birthplace, pedigree, and juvenile associations of this worthy. Whence he or his forbears got his name or how, I don't know ; but for the fact that it is to be inferred he got it in infancy, I should have thought he borrowed it ; he borrowed everything else he ever had, such things as he got under the credit system only excepted in deference, however, to the axiom that there is *some* exception to *all* general rules, I am willing to believe that he got this much honestly, by *bona fide* gift or inheritance, and without false pretence.

I have had a hard time of it endeavouring to assign to Bolus his leading vice ; I have given up the task in despair ; but I have essayed to designate that one which gave him, in the end, most celebrity. I am aware that it is invidious to make comparisons, and to give pre-eminence to one over other rival qualities and gifts, where all have high claims to distinction ; but then, the stern justice of criticism in this case requires a discrimination which, to be intelligible and definite, must be relative and comparative. I therefore take

the responsibility of saying, after due reflection, that in my opinion Bolus's reputation stood higher for lying than for anything else ; and in thus assigning pre-eminence to this poetic property, I do it without any desire to derogate from other brilliant characteristics belonging to the same general category, which have drawn the wondering notice of the world.

Some men are liars from interest ; not because they have no regard for truth, but because they have less regard for it than for gain ; some are liars from vanity, because they would rather be well thought of by others, than have reason for thinking well of themselves ; some are liars from a sort of necessity which overbears, by the weight of temptation, the sense of virtue ; some are enticed away by the allurements of pleasure, or seduced by evil example and education. Bolus was none of these ; he belonged to a higher department of the fine arts, and to a higher class of professors of this sort of Belles-Lettres. Bolus was a natural liar, just as some horses are natural pacers, and some dogs natural setters. What he did in that walk was from the irresistible promptings of instinct, and a disinterested love of art. His genius and his performances were free from the vulgar alloy of interest or temptation. Accordingly, he did not labour a lie ; he lied with a relish ; he lied with a coming appetite, growing with what it fed on ; he lied from the delight of invention and the charm of fictitious narrative. It is true he applied his art to the practical purposes of life ; but in so far did he glory the more in it ; just as an ingenious machinist rejoices that his invention, while it has honoured science, has also supplied a common want.

Bolus's genius for lying was encyclopaediacal ; it was what German criticism calls many-sided. It embraced all subjects without distinction or partiality. It was equally good upon all, " from grave to gay, from lively to severe."

Bolus's lying came from his greatness of soul and his comprehensiveness of mind. The truth was too small for him. Fact was too dry and commonplace for the fervour of his genius. Besides, great as was his memory—for he even remembered the outlines of his chief lies—his invention was still larger. He had a great contempt for history and historians. He thought them tame and timid cobblers ; mere tinkers on other people's wares—simple parrots and magpies of other men's sayings or doings ; borrowers of and acknowledged debtors for others' chattels, got without skill ; they had no separate estate in their ideas ; they were bailees of goods, which they did not pretend to hold by adverse title ; buriers of talents in napkins making no usury ; barren and unprofitable non-producers in the intellectual vineyard—*nati consumere fruges*.

He adopted a fact occasionally to start with, but like a Sheffield razor and the crude ore, the workmanship, polish, and value were all

his own ; a Thibet shawl could as well be credited to the insensate goat that grew the wool, as the author of a fact Bolus honoured with his artistical skill could claim to be the inventor of the story.

His experiments upon credulity, like charity, began at home. He had long torn down the partition wall between his imagination and his memory. He had long ceased to distinguish between the impressions made upon his mind by what came *from* it, and what came *to* it ; all ideas were facts to him.

Bolus's life was not a common man's life ; his world was not the hard, work-day world the groundlings live in ; he moved in a sphere of poetry ; he lived amidst the ideal and romantic. Not that he was not practical enough, when he chose to be ; by no means. He bought goods and chattels, lands and tenements, like other men ; but he got them under a state of poetic illusion, and paid for them in an imaginary way. Even the titles he gave were not of the *earthly* sort—they were sometimes *clouded*. He gave notes, too—how well I know it !—like other men ; he paid them like himself.

How well he asserted the Spiritual over the Material ! How he delighted to turn an abstract idea into concrete cash—to make a few blots of ink, representing a little thought, turn out a labour-saving machine, and bring into his pocket money which many days of hard, exhausting labour would not procure ! What pious joy it gave him to see the days of the good Samaritan return, and the hard hand of avarice relax its grasp on land and negroes, pork and clothes, beneath the soft speeches and kind promises of future rewards—blending in the act the three cardinal virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity ; while, in the result, the chief of these three was *Charity* !

There was something sublime in the idea—this elevating the spirit of man to its true and primeval dominion over things of sense and grosser matter.

It is true that in these practical romances Bolus was charged with a defective taste in repeating himself. The justice of the charge must be, at least, partially acknowledged ; this I know from a client, to whom Ovid sold a tract of land after having sold it twice before. I cannot say, though, that his forgetting to mention this circumstance made any difference, for Bolus originally had no title.

There was nothing narrow, sectarian, or sectional in Bolus's lying. It was, on the contrary, broad and catholic. It had no respect to times or places. It was as wide and illimitable as elastic, and variable as the air he spent in giving it expression. It was a generous, gentlemanly, whole-souled faculty. It was often employed on occasions of thrift, but no more, and no more zealously on these than on others of no profit to himself. He was an Egotist, but a magnificent one ; he was not a liar because an egotist, but an egotist because a liar. He usually made himself the hero of the romantic exploits

and adventures he narrated ; but this was not so much to exalt himself, as because it was more convenient to his art. He had nothing malignant or invidious in his nature. If he exalted himself, it was seldom or never to the disparagement of others, unless, indeed, those others were merely imaginary persons, or too far off to be hurt. He would as soon lie for you as for himself. It was all the same, so there was something doing in his line of business, except in those cases in which his necessities required to be fed at your expense.

He did not confine himself to mere lingual lying ; one tongue was not enough for all the business he had on hand. He acted lies as well. Indeed, sometimes his very silence was a lie. He made nonentity fib for him, and performed wondrous feats by a "masterly inactivity."

The *personnel* of this distinguished Votary of the Muse was happily fitted to his part. He was strikingly handsome. There was something in his air and bearing almost princely, certainly quite distinguished. His manners were winning, his address frank, cordial and flowing. He was built after the model and structure of Bolingbroke in his youth, *Americanized* and *Hoosierized* a little by "raising in," and an adaptation to, the Backwoods. He was fluent but choice of diction, a little sonorous in the structure of his sentences to give effect to a voice like an organ. His countenance was open and engaging, usually sedate of expression, but capable of any modifications at the shortest notice. Add to this his intelligence, shrewdness, tact, humour and that he was a ready debater and elegant declaimer, and had the gift of bringing out to the fullest extent his resources, and you may see that Ovid, in a new country, was a man apt to make no mean impression. He drew the loose population around him as the magnet draws iron filings. He was a man for the "boys,"—then a numerous and influential class. His generous profusion and free-handed manner impressed them as the bounty of Caesar the loafing commonalty of Rome. Bolus was no niggard. He never higgled or chattered about small things. He was as free with his own money—if he ever had any of his own—as with yours. If he never paid borrowed money, he never asked payment of others. If you wished him to lend you any, he would give you a handful without counting it ; if you handed him any, you were losing time in counting it, for you never saw anything of it again ; Shallow's funded debt on Falstaff were as safe an investment. This would have been an equal commerce, but, unfortunately for Bolus's friends, the proportion between his disbursements and receipts was something scant. Such a spend-thrift never made a track even in the flush times of 1836. It took as much to support him as a first-class steamboat. His bills at the groceries were as long as John Q. Adams's Abolition Petition, or, if pasted together, would have matched the great Chartist memorial.

He would as soon treat a regiment or charter the grocery for the day as any other way; and after the crowd had heartily drank—some of them “laying their souls in soak”—if he did not have the money convenient—as when did he?—he would fumble in his pocket, mutter something about nothing less than a \$100 bill, and direct the score, with a lordly familiarity, to be charged to his account.

Ovid had early possessed the faculty of ubiquity. He had been born in more places than Homer. In an hour's discourse *he* would, with more than the speed of Ariel, travel at every point of the compass, from Portland to San Antonio, some famous adventure always occurring just as he “rounded to,” or while stationary, though he did not remain longer than to see it. He was present at every important debate in the Senate at Washington, and had heard every popular speaker on the hustings, at the bar, and in the pulpit, in the United States. He had been concerned in many important causes with Grymes and against Mazereau in New Orleans, and had borne no small share in the fierce forensic battles which, with singular luck, *he* and Grymes always won in the courts of the Crescent City. And such frolics as they had when they laid aside their heavy armour, after the heat and burden of the day! Such gambling! A negro *ante* and twenty on the call was moderate playing. What lots of “Ethiopian captives” and other plunder *he raked down* vexed Arithmetic to count and credulity to believe; and, had it not been for Bolus's generosity in giving “the boys” a chance to win back *by doubling off on the high hand*, there is no knowing what changes of owners would not have occurred in the Rapides or on the German Coast.

The Florida war and the Texas revolution had each furnished a brilliant theatre for Ovid's chivalrous emprise. Jack Hays and he were great chums. Jack and he had many a hearty laugh over the odd trick of Ovid, in lassoing a Camanche chief, while galloping a stolen horse bare-backed, up the San Saba hills. But he had the rig on Jack again when he made him charge on a brood of about twenty Camanches who had got into a mote of timber in the prairies, and were shooting their arrows from the covert, while Ovid, with a six-barrelled rifle, was taking them on the wing as Jack rode in and flushed them!

It was an affecting story and feelingly told, that of his and Jim Bowie's rescuing an American girl from the Apaches, and returning her to her parents in St. Louis; and it would have been still more tender had it not been for the unfortunate necessity Bolus was under of shooting a brace of gay lieutenants on the border, one frosty morning, before breakfast, back of the fort, for taking unbecoming liberties with the fair damosel, the spoil of his bow and spear.

But the girls Ovid courted, and the miraculous adventures he had met with in love, beggared, by the comparison, all the fortune of war had done for him. Old Nugent's daughter, Sallie, was his narrowest escape. Sallie was accomplished to the romantic extent of two ocean steamers, and four blocks of buildings in Boston, separated only from immediate "perception and pernity" by the contingency of old Nugent's recovering from a confirmed dropsy, for which he had twice been ineffectually tapped. The day was set—the presents made—superb of course—the guests invited: the old Sea Captain insisted on Bolus's setting his negroes free, and taking five thousand dollars apiece for the loss. Bolus's love for the "peculiar institution" wouldn't stand it. Rather than submit to such degradation, Ovid broke off the match, and left Sallie broken-hearted; a disease from which she did not recover until about six months afterwards, when she ran off with the mate of her father's ship, the *Sea Serpent*, in the Rio trade.

Gossip and personal anecdote were the especial subjects of Ovid's elocution. He was intimate with all the notabilities of the political circles. He was a privileged visitor of the political green-room. He was admitted back into the laboratory when the political thunder was manufactured, and into the office where the magnetic wires were worked. He knew the origin of every party question and movement, and had a finger in every pie the party cooks of Tammany baked for the body politic.

One thing in Ovid I can never forgive. This was his coming it over poor Ben. I don't object to it on the score of the swindle. That was to have been expected. But swindling Ben was degrading the dignity of the art. True, it illustrated the universality of his science, but it lowered it to a beggarly process of mean deception. There was no skill in it. It was little better than crude larceny. A child could have done it; it had as well been done to a child. It was like catching a cow with a lariat, or setting a steel trap for a pet pig. True, Bolus had nearly practised out of custom. He had worn his art threadbare. Men who could afford to be cheated had all been worked up or been scared away. Besides, Frost couldn't be put off. He talked of money in a most ominous connection with blood. The thing could be settled by a bill of exchange. Ben's name was unfortunately good—the amount some \$1600. Ben *had* a fine tract of land in S—r. He had not got it now. Bolus only gave Ben one wrench—that was enough. Ben never breathed easy afterwards. All the V's and X's of ten years' hard practice went in that penful of ink. Fie! Bolus, Monroe Edwards wouldn't have done that. He would sooner have sunk down to the level of some honest calling for a living than have put his profession to so mean a shift. I can conceive of but one

extenuation : Bolus was on the lift for Texas, and the desire was natural to qualify himself for citizenship.

The genius of Bolus, strong in its unassisted strength, yet gleamed out more brilliantly under the genial influence of "the rosy." With boon companions and "reaming swats," it was worth while to hear him of a winter evening. He could "clothe the palpable and the familiar with golden exhalations of the dawn." The most commonplace objects became dignified. There was a history to the commonest articles about him ; that book was given him by Mr. Van Buren—the walking-stick was a present from Gen. Jackson ; the thrice-watered Monongahela, just drawn from the grocery hard by, was the last of a distillation of 1825, smuggled in from Ireland, and presented to him by a friend in New Orleans, on easy terms with the collector ; the cigars, not too fragrant, were of a box sent him by a schoolmate from Cuba, in 1834—*before* he visited the Island. And talking of Cuba—he had met with an adventure there, the impression of which never could be effaced from his mind. He had gone, at the instance of Don Carlos y Cubanos (an intimate classmate in a Kentucky Catholic College), whose life he had saved from a mob in Louisville, at the imminent risk of his own. The Don had a sister of blooming sixteen, the least of whose charms were two or three coffee plantations, some hundreds of slaves, and a suitable garnish of doubloons, accumulated during her minority, in the hands of her uncle and guardian, the Captain-General. All went well with the young lovers—for such, of course, they were—until Bolus, with his usual frank indiscretion, in a conversation with the priest avowed himself a Protestant. Then came trouble. Every effort was made to convert him ; but Bolus's faith resisted the eloquent tongue of the priest and the more eloquent eyes of Donna Isabella. The brother pleaded the old friendship—urged a seeming and formal conformity—the Captain-General argued the case like a politician—the Señorita like a warm and devoted woman. All would not do. The Captain-General forbade his longer sojourn on the island. Bolus took leave of the fair Señorita ; the parting interview, held in the orange bower, was affecting ; Donna Isabella, with dishevelled hair, threw herself at his feet ; the tears streamed from her eyes ; in liquid tones, broken by grief, she implored him to relent, reminded him of her love, of her trust in him. "Gentlemen," Bolus continued, "I confess to the weakness—I wavered—but then my eyes happened to fall on the breast-pin with a lock of my mother's hair—I recovered my courage ; I shook her gently from me. I felt my last hold on earth was loosened—my last hope of peace destroyed. Since that hour my life has been a burden. Yes, Gentlemen, you see before you a broken-hearted man—a martyr to his religion. But, away

with these melancholy thoughts! Boys, pass round the jorum." And wiping his eyes, he drowned the wasting sorrow in a long draught of the poteen; and, being much refreshed, was able to carry the burden on a little further—*videlicet*, to the next lie.

It must not be supposed that Bolus was destitute of the tame virtue of prudence—or that this was confined to the avoidance of the improvident habit of squandering his money in paying old debts. He took reasonably good care of his person. He avoided all unnecessary exposures, chiefly from a patriotic desire, probably of continuing his good offices to his country. His recklessness was, for the most part, lingual. To hear him talk, one might suppose he held his carcass merely for a target to try guns and knives upon; or that the business of his life was to draw men up to ten paces or less, for sheer improvement in marksmanship. Such exploits as he had gone through with, dwarfed the heroes of romance to very pigmy and sneaking proportions. Pistol at the bridge, when he bluffed at honest Fluellen, might have envied the swashbuckler airs Ovid would sometimes put on. But I never could exactly identify the place he had laid out for his burying-ground. Indeed, I had occasion to know that he declined to understand several not very ambiguous hints, upon which he might, with as good a grace as Othello, have spoken, not to mention one or two pressing invitations which his modesty led him to refuse. I do not know that the base sense of fear had anything to do with these declinations; possibly he might have thought he had done his share of fighting, and did not wish to monopolise; or his principles forbade it—I mean those which opposed his paying a debt; knowing he could not cheat that inexorable creditor, Death, of his claim, he did the next thing to it, which was to delay and shirk payment as long as possible.

It remains to add a word of criticism on this great *Lyric* artist.

In Lying, Bolus was not only a successful, but he was a very able practitioner. Like every other eminent artist, he brought all his faculties to bear upon his art. Though quick of perception and prompt of invention, he did not trust himself to the inspirations of his genius for *improvising* a lie, when he could well premeditate one. He deliberately built up the substantial masonry, relying upon the occasion and its accessories chiefly for embellishment and collateral supports, as Burke excogitated the more solid parts of his great speeches, and left unprepared only the illustrations and fancywork.

Bolus's manner was, like every truly great man's, his own. It was excellent. He did not come blushing up to a lie, as some otherwise very passable liars do, as if he were making a mean compromise between his guilty passion or morbid vanity, and a struggling conscience. Bolus had long since settled all disputes with *his* conscience. He and it were on very good terms—at least,

if there was no affection between the couple, there was no fuss in the family ; or, if there were any scenes or angry passages they were reserved for strict privacy, and never got out. My own opinion is, that he was as destitute of the article as an ostrich. Thus he came to his work bravely, cheerfully, and composedly. The delights of composition, invention, and narration did not fluster his style or agitate his delivery. He knew how, in the tumult of passion, to assume the "temperance to give it smoothness." A lie never ran away with him as it is apt to do with young performers ; he could always manage and guide it ; and to have seen him fairly mounted would have given you some idea of the polished elegance of D'Orsay and the superb *manège* of Murat. There is a tone and manner of narration different from those used in delivering ideas just conceived ; just as there is a difference between the sound of the voice in reading and in speaking. Bolus knew this and practised on it. When he was narrating, he put the facts in order, and seemed to speak them out of his memory ; but not formally, or as if by rote. He would stop himself to correct a date ; recollect he was wrong—he was *that* year at the White Sulphur or Saratoga, etc. ; having got the date right, the names of persons present would be incorrect, etc. ; and these he corrected in turn. A stranger hearing him would have feared the marring of a good story by too fastidious a conscientiousness in the narrator.

His zeal in pursuit of a lie under difficulties was remarkable. The society around him—if such it could be called—was hardly fitted, without some previous preparation, for an immediate introduction to Almack's or the classic precincts of Gore House. The manners of the natives were rather plain than ornate, and candour rather than polish predominated in their conversation. Bolus had need of some forbearance to withstand the interruptions and cross-examinations with which his revelations were sometimes received. But he possessed this in a remarkable degree. I recollect, on one occasion, when he was giving an account of a providential escape he was signally favoured with (when boarded by a pirate off the Isle of Pines, and he pleaded masonry, and gave a sign he had got out of the *Disclosures of Morgan*), Tom Johnson interrupted him to say that he had heard *that* before (which was more than Bolus had ever done). B. immediately rejoined that he had, he believed, given him, Tom, a *running* sketch of the incident. "Rather," said Tom, "I think a *lying* sketch." Bolus scarcely smiled as he replied that Tom was a wag, and couldn't help turning the most serious things into jests ; and went on with his usual brilliancy to finish the narrative. Bolus did not overcrowd his canvas. His figures were never confused, and the subordinates and accessories did not withdraw attention from the main and substantive lie.

He never squandered his lies profusely ; thinking, with the poet, that " bounteous, not prodigal, is kind Nature's hand," he kept the golden mean between penuriousness and prodigality ; never stingy of his lies, he was not wasteful of them, but was rather fore-handed than pushed or embarrassed, having, usually, fictitious stock to be freshly put on 'change when he wished to " make a raise." In most of his fables he inculcated but a single leading idea, but contrived to make the several facts of the narrative fall in very gracefully with the principal scheme.

The rock on which many promising young liars, who might otherwise have risen to merited distinction, have split, is vanity ; this marplot vice betrays itself in the exultation manifested on the occasion of a decided hit, an exultation too inordinate for mere recital, and which betrays authorship ; and to betray authorship in the present barbaric moral and intellectual condition of the world is fatal. True, there seems to be some inconsistency here. Dickens and Bulwer can do as much lying, for money too, as they choose, and no one blames them any more than they would blame a lawyer regularly *fee'd* to do it ; but let any man, gifted with the same genius, try his hand at it, not deliberately and in writing, but merely orally, and ugly names are given him, and he is proscribed. Bolus heroically suppressed exultation over the victories his lies achieved.

Alas ! for the beautiful things of earth, its flowers, its sunsets—its lovely girls—its lies—brief and fleeting are their date. Lying is a very delicate accomplishment. It must be tenderly cared for and jealously guarded. It must not be overworked. Bolus forgot this salutary caution. The people found out his art. However dull the commons are as to other matters, they get sharp enough after a while to whatever concerns their bread and butter. Bolus, not having confined his art to political matters, sounded at last the depths and explored the limits of popular credulity. The denizens of this degenerate age had not the disinterestedness of Prince Hal, who " cared now how many fed at his cost " ; they got tired at last of promises to pay. The credit system, common before as pump water, adhering like the elective franchise to every voter, began to take the worldly wisdom of Falstaff's mercer, and ask security, and security liked something more substantial than plausible promises. In this forlorn condition of the country, returning to its savage state, and abandoning the refinements of a ripe Anglo-Saxon civilisation for the sordid safety of Mexican or Chinese modes of traffic ; deserting the sweet simplicity of its ancient trustings and the poetic illusions of Augustus Tomlinson for the vulgar saws of poor Richard—Bolus, with a sigh like that breathed out by his great prototype after his apostrophe to London, gathered up, one bright moonlight night, his articles of value,

shook the dust from his feet, and departed from a land unworthy of his longer sojourn. With that delicate consideration for the feelings of his friends which, like the politeness of Charles II., never forsook him, he spared them the pain of a parting interview. He left no greetings of kindness, no messages of love, nor did he ask assurances of their lively remembrance. It was quite unnecessary. In every house he had left an autograph, in every ledger a souvenir. They will never forget him. Their connection with him will be ever regarded as

——— The *greenest* spot
In memory's waste.

Poor Ben, whom he had honoured with the last marks of his confidence, can scarcely speak of him to this day without tears in his eyes. Far away towards the setting sun he hied him, until, at last, with a hermit's disgust at the degradation of the world, like Ignatius turned monk, he pitched his tabernacle amidst the smiling prairies that sleep in vernal beauty in the shadow of the San Saba mountains. There let his mighty genius rest. It has earned repose. We leave Themistocles to his voluntary exile.

THOMAS BANGS THORPE

1815-1878

A "HOOSIER" IN SEARCH OF JUSTICE

ABOUT one hundred and twenty miles from New Orleans reposes, in all rural happiness, one of the pleasantest little towns in the South, that reflects itself in the mysterious waters of the Mississippi.

To the extreme right of the town, looking at it from the river, may be seen a comfortable-looking building, surrounded by China trees—just such a place as sentimental misses dream of when they have indistinct notions of "settling in the world."

This little "burban bandbox," however, is not occupied by the airs of love, nor the airs of the lute, but by a strong limb of the law, a gnarled one too, who knuckles down to business, and digs out of the "uncertainties of his profession" decisions, and reasons, and causes, and effects, nowhere to be met with except in the science called, par excellence, the "perfection of human reason."

Around the interior walls of this romantic-looking place may be found an extensive library, where all the "statutes," from Moses' time down to the present day, are ranged side by side; in these musty books the owner revels day and night, digesting "digests," and growing the while sallow with indigestion.

On the evening-time of a fine summer's day, the sage lawyer might have been seen walled in with books and manuscripts, his eye full of thought, and his bald high forehead sparkling with the rays of the setting sun, as if his genius was making itself visible to the senses; page after page he searched, musty parchments were scanned, an expression of care and anxiety indented itself on the stern features of his face, and, with a sigh of despair, he desisted from his labours, uttering aloud his feelings that he feared his case was a hopeless one.

Then he renewed again his mental labour with tenfold vigour,

making the very silence, with which he pursued his thoughts, ominous, as if a spirit were in his presence.

The door of the lawyer's office opened, there pressed forward the tall, gaunt figure of a man, a perfect model of physical power and endurance—a Western flatboatman. The lawyer heeded not his presence, and started, as if from a dream, as the harsh tones of inquiry grated upon his ear of—

"Does a 'Squire live here?"

"They call me so," was the reply, as soon as he had recovered from his astonishment.

"Well, 'Squire," continued the intruder, "I have got a case for you, and I want jestess, if it costs the best load of produce that ever come from In-di-an."

The man of the law asked what was the difficulty.

"It's this, 'Squire: I'm bound for Orleans, and put in here for coffee and other little fixins; a chap with a face whiskered up like a prairie dog, says, says he—

"'Stranger, I see you've got cocks on board of your boat—bring one ashore, and I'll pit one against him that'll lick his legs off in less time than you could gaff him.' Well, 'Squire, *I never take a dar*. Says I, 'Stranger, I'm thar at wunce'; and in twenty minutes the cocks were on the levee, like perfect saints.

"We chucked them together, and my bird, 'Squire, now mind, 'Squire, my bird never struck a lick, not a single blow, but tuck to his heels and run, and, by thunder! threw up his feed, actewelly vomited. The stakeholder gave up the money agin me, and now I want jestess; as sure as fogs, my bird was physicked, or he'd stood up to his business like a wild cat."

The lawyer heard the story with patience, but flatly refused to have anything to do with the matter.

"Perhaps," said the boatman, drawing out a corpulent pocket-book, "perhaps you think I can't pay—here's the money; help yourself—give me jestess, and draw on my purse like an ox team."

To the astonishment of the flatboatman the lawyer still refused, but unlike many of his profession, gave his would-be client, without charge, some general advice about going on board of his boat, shoving off for New Orleans, and abandoning the suit altogether.

The flatboatman stared with profound astonishment, and asked the lawyer, "if he was sure enough 'Squire."

Receiving an affirmative reply, he pressed every argument he could use, to have him undertake his case and get him "jestess," but when he found that his efforts were unavailing he quietly seated himself for the first time, put his hat aside, crossed his legs, then looking up to the ceiling, with an expression of great patience he

requested the "'Squire to read to him the Louisiana laws on cock-fighting."

The lawyer said that he did not know of a single statute in the State upon the subject.

The boatman started up as if he had been shot, exclaiming—

"No laws in the State on cock-fighting? No, no, 'Squire you can't possum me; give us the law."

The refusal again followed; the astonishment of the boatman increased, and throwing himself into a comico-heroic attitude, he waved his long fingers around the side of the room, and asked—

"What all them thar books were about?"

"All about the law."

"Well, then, 'Squire, am I to understand that none of them thar books contain a single law on cock-fighting?"

"You are."

"And, 'Squire, am I to understand that thar ain't no laws in Louisiana on cock-fighting?"

"You are."

"And am I to understand that you call yourself a 'Squire, and that you don't know anything about cock-fighting?"

"You are."

The astonishment of the boatman at this reply for a moment was unbounded, and then suddenly ceased; the awe with which he looked upon "the 'Squire" also ceased, and resuming his natural awkward and familiar carriage, he took up his hat, and looking to the door, with a broad grin of supreme contempt in his face, he observed—

"That a 'Squire that did not know the laws of cock-fighting, in his opinion, was distinctly an infernal old chuckle-headed fool!"

JAMES THOMAS FIELDS

1816-1881

THE PETTIBONE LINEAGE

My name is Esek Pettibone, and I wish to affirm in the outset that it is a good thing to be well-born. In thus connecting the mention of my name with a positive statement, I am not unaware that a catastrophe lies coiled up in the juxtaposition. But I cannot help writing plainly that I am still in favour of a distinguished family-tree. ESTO PERPETUA ! To have had somebody for a great-grandfather that was somebody is exciting. To be able to look back on long lines of ancestry that were rich, but respectable, seems decorous and all right. The present Earl of Warwick, I think, must have an idea that strict justice has been done *him* in the way of being launched properly into the world. I saw the Duke of Newcastle once, and as the farmer in Conway described Mount Washington, I thought the Duke felt a propensity to "hunch up some." Somehow it is pleasant to look down on the crowd and have a conscious right to do so.

Left an orphan at the tender age of four years, having no brothers or sisters to prop me round with young affections and sympathies, I fell into three pairs of hands, excellent in their way, but peculiar. Patience, Eunice, and Mary Ann Pettibone were my aunts on my father's side. All my mother's relations kept shady when the lonely orphan looked about for protection ; but Patience Pettibone, in her stately way, said—"The boy belongs to a good family, and he shall never want while his three aunts can support him." So I went to live with my plain but benignant protectors in the State of New Hampshire.

During my boyhood, the best-drilled lesson that fell to my keeping was this : "Respect yourself. We come of more than ordinary parentage. Superior blood was probably concerned in getting up the Pettibones. Hold your head erect, and some day you shall have proof of your high lineage."

I remember once, on being told that I must not share my juvenile sports with the butcher's three little beings, I begged to know why

not. Aunt Eunice looked at Patience, and Mary Ann knew what she meant.

"My child," slowly murmured the eldest sister, "our family no doubt came of a very old stock; perhaps we belong to the nobility. Our ancestors, it is thought, came over laden with honours, and no doubt were embarrassed with riches, though the latter importation has dwindled in the lapse of years. Respect yourself, and when you grow up you will not regret that your old and careful aunt did not wish you to play with the butcher's offspring."

I felt mortified that I ever had a desire to "knuckle up" with any but kings' sons, or sultans' little boys. I longed to be among my equals in the urchin line, and fly my kite with only high-born youngsters.

Thus I lived in a constant scene of self-enchancement on the part of the sisters, who assumed all the port and feeling that propriety belonged to ladies of quality. Patrimonial splendour to come danced before their dim eyes; and handsome settlements, gay equipages, and a general grandeur of some sort loomed up in the future for the American branch of the House of Pettibone.

It was a life of opulent self-delusion, which my aunts were never tired of nursing: and I was too young to doubt the reality of it. All the members of our little household held up their heads, as if each said, in so many words, "There is no original sin in *our* composition, whatever of that commodity there may be mixed up with the common clay of Snowborough."

Aunt Patience was a star, and dwelt apart. Aunt Eunice looked at her through a determined pair of spectacles, and worshipped while she gazed. The youngest sister lived in a dreamy state of honours to come, and had constant zoological visions of lions, griffins, and unicorns, drawn and quartered in every possible style known to the Heralds' College. The Reverend Hebrew Bullet, who used to drop in quite often and drink several compulsory glasses of home-made wine, encouraged his three parishioners in their aristocratic notions, and extolled them for what he called their "stooping-down to every-day life." He differed with the ladies of our house only on one point. He contended that the unicorn of the Bible and the rhinoceros of to-day were one and the same animal. My aunts held a different opinion.

In the sleeping-room of my Aunt Patience reposed a trunk. Often during my childish years I longed to lift the lid and spy among its contents the treasures my young fancy conjured up as lying there in state. I dared not ask to have the cover raised for my gratification, as I had often been told I was "too little" to estimate aright what that armorial box contained. "When you grow up you shall see the inside of it," Aunt Mary used to say to me; and so I

wondered, and wished, but all in vain. I must have the virtue of *years* before I could view the treasures of past magnificence so long entombed in that wooden sarcophagus. Once I saw the faded sisters bending over the trunk together, and, as I thought, embalming something in camphor. Curiosity impelled me to linger, but, under some pretext, I was nodded out of the room.

Although my kinswomen's means were far from ample, they determined that Swiftmouth College should have the distinction of calling me one of her sons, and accordingly I was in due time sent for preparation to a neighbouring academy. Years of study and hard fare in country boarding-houses told upon my self-importance as the descendant of a great Englishman, notwithstanding all my letters from the honoured three came with counsel to "respect myself and keep up the dignity of the family." Growing-up man forgets good counsel. The Arcadia of respectability is apt to give place to the levity of football and other low-toned accomplishments. The book of life, at the period, opens readily at fun and frolic, and the insignia of greatness gives the school-boy no envious pangs.

I was nineteen when I entered the hoary halls of Swiftmouth. I call them hoary, because they had been built more than fifty years. To me they seemed uncommonly hoary, and I snuffed antiquity in the dusty purlieus. I now began to study, in good earnest, the wisdom of the past. I saw clearly the value of dead men and mouldy precepts, especially if the former had been entombed a thousand years, and if the latter were well done in sounding Greek and Latin. I began to reverence royal lines of deceased monarchs, and longed to connect my own name, now growing into college popularity, with some far-off mighty one who had ruled in pomp and luxury his obsequious people. The trunk in Snowborough troubled my dreams. In that receptacle still slept the proof of our family distinction. "I will go," quoth I, "to the home of my aunts next vacation and there learn *how* we became mighty, and discover precisely why we don't practise to-day our inherited claims to glory."

I went to Snowborough. Aunt Patience was now anxious to lay before her impatient nephew the proof he burned to behold. But first she must explain. All the old family documents and letters were, no doubt, destroyed in the great fire of '98, as nothing in the shape of parchment or paper implying nobility had ever been discovered in Snowborough or elsewhere. *But* there had been preserved for many years a suit of imperial clothes that had been worn by their great-grandfather in England, and, no doubt, in the New World also. These garments had been carefully watched and guarded, for were they not the proof that their owner belonged to a station in life second, if second at all, to the royal court of King

George itself? Precious casket, into which I was soon to have the privilege of gazing! Through how many long years these fond, foolish virgins had lighted their unflickering lamps of expectation and hope at this cherished old shrine!

I was now on my way to the family repository of all our greatness. I went upstairs "on the jump." We all knelt down before the well-preserved box; and my proud Aunt Patience, in a somewhat reverent manner, turned the key. My heart—I am not ashamed to confess it now, although it is forty years since the quartet, in search of family honours, were on their knees that summer afternoon in Snowborough—my heart beat high. I was about to look on that which might be a duke's or an earl's regalia. And I was descended from the owner in a direct line! I had lately been reading Shakespeare's *Titus Andronicus*, and I remembered, there before the trunk, the lines:

O sacred receptacle of my joys,
Sweet cell of virtue and nobility!

The lid went up, and the sisters began to unroll the precious garments, which seemed all enshrined in aromatic gums and spices. The odour of that interior lives with me to this day; and I grow faint with the memory of that hour. With pious precision the clothes were uncovered, and at last the whole suit was laid before my expectant eyes.

Reader! I am an old man now, and have not long to walk this planet. But, whatever dreadful shock may be in reserve for my declining years, I am certain I can bear it; for I went through that scene at Snowborough, and still live!

When the garments were fully displayed, all the aunts looked at me. I had been to college; I had studied Burke's *Peerage*; I had been once to New York. Perhaps I could immediately name the exact station in noble British life to which that suit of clothes belonged. I could; I saw it all at a glance. I grew flustered and pale. I dared not look my poor deluded female relatives in the face.

"What rank in the peerage do those gold-laced garments and big buttons betoken?" cried all three.

"*It is a suit of servant's livery!*" gasped I, and fell back with a shudder.

That evening, after the sun had gone down, we buried those hateful garments in a ditch at the bottom of the garden. Rest here, perturbed body-coat, yellow trousers, brown gaiters, and all!

Vain pomp and glory of this world, I hate ye!

FREDERICK S. COZZENS

1818-1869

THE FAMILY HORSE

I

I HAVE bought me a horse. As I had obtained some skill in the *manège* during my younger days, it was a matter of consideration to have a saddle-horse. It surprised me to find good saddle-horses very abundant soon after my consultation with the stage proprietor upon this topic. There were strange saddle-horses to sell almost every day. One man was very candid about his horse; he told me, if his horse had a blemish, he wouldn't wait to be asked about it; he would tell it right out; and if a man didn't want him then, he needn't take him. He also proposed to put him on trial for sixty days, giving his note for the amount paid him for the horse, to be taken up in case the animal were returned.

I asked him what were the principal defects of the horse. He said he'd been fired once, because they thought he was spavined; but there was no more spavin to him than there was to a fresh-laid egg—he was as sound as a dollar.

I asked him if he would just state what were the defects of the horse. He answered that he once had the pink eye, and added, "Now that's honest."

I thought so, but proceeded to question him closely. I asked him if he had the bots. He said, not a bot.

I asked him if he would go. He said he would go till he dropped down dead; just touch him with a whip, and he'll jump out of his hide.

I inquired how old he was. He answered, just eight years, exactly—some men, he said, wanted to make their horses younger than they be; he was willing to speak right out, and own up he was eight years.

I asked him if there were any other objections. He said, no, except that he was inclined to be a little gay; "but," he added, "he is so kind, a child can drive him with a thread."

I asked him if he was a good family horse. He replied that no

lady that ever drew rein over him would be willing to part with him.

Then I asked him his price. He answered that no man could have bought him for one hundred dollars a month ago, but now he was willing to sell him for seventy-five, on account of having a note to pay.

This seemed such a very low price, I was about saying I would take him, when Mrs. Sparrowgrass whispered that I had better *see the horse first*. I confess I was a little afraid of losing my bargain by it, but, out of deference to Mrs. S., I did ask to see the horse before I bought him. He said he would fetch him down. "No man," he added, "ought to buy a horse unless he's saw him."

When the horse came down, it struck me that, whatever his qualities might be, his personal appearance was against him. One of his forelegs was shaped like the handle of our punch-ladle, and the remaining three legs, about the fetlock, were slightly bunchy. Besides, he had no tail to brag of; and his back had a very hollow sweep from his high haunches to his low shoulder-blades.

I was much pleased, however, with the fondness and pride manifested by his owner, as he held up by both sides of the bridle the rather longish head of his horse, surmounting a neck shaped like a pea-pod, and said, in a sort of triumphant voice, "Three-quarters blood!"

Mrs. Sparrowgrass flushed up a little when she asked me if I intended to purchase *that* horse, and added that if I did, she would never want to ride.

So I told the man he would not suit me.

He answered by suddenly throwing himself upon his stomach across the backbone of his horse; and then, by turning round as on a pivot, got up a-straddle of him; then he gave his horse a kick in the ribs that caused him to jump out with all his legs like a frog, and then off went the spoon-legged animal with a gait that was not a trot, nor yet precisely pacing. He rode around our grass-plot twice, and then pulled his horse's head up like the cock of a musket. "That," said he, "is *time*."

I replied that he did seem to go pretty fast.

"Pretty fast!" said his owner. "Well, do you know Mr. —?" mentioning one of the richest men in our village.

I replied that I was acquainted with him.

"Well," said he, "you know his horse?"

I replied that I had no personal acquaintance with him.

"Well," said he, "he's the fastest horse in the country—jist so—I'm willing to admit it. But do you know I offered to put my horse agin' his to trot? I had no money to put up, or rayther, to spare; but I offered to trot him, horse agin' horse, and the winner to take both horses, and I tell you—he *wouldn't do it*?"

Mrs. Sparrowgrass got a little nervous, and twitched me by the skirt of the coat. "Dear," said she, "let him go."

I assured her that I would not buy the horse, and told the man firmly I would not buy him. He said very well—if he didn't suit 'twas no use to keep a-talkin'; but, he added, he'd be down agin' with another horse, next morning, that belonged to his brother; and if he didn't suit me, then I didn't want a horse. With this remark he rode off. . . .

"It rains very hard," said Mrs. Sparrowgrass, looking out of the window next morning. Sure enough, the rain was sweeping broadcast over the country, and the four Sparrowgrassii were flattening a quartet of noses against the window-panes, believing most faithfully the man would bring the horse that belonged to his brother, in spite of the elements. It was hoping against hope; no man having a horse to sell will trot him out in a rainstorm, unless he intends to sell him at a bargain—but childhood is so credulous!

The succeeding morning was bright, however, and down came the horse. He had been very cleverly groomed, and looked pleasant under the saddle. The man led him back and forth before the door.

"There, 'squire, 's as good a hos as ever stood on iron."

Mrs. Sparrowgrass asked me what he meant by that. I replied, it was a figurative way of expressing, in horsetalk, that he was as good a horse as ever stood in shoe-leather.

"He's a handsome hos, 'squire," said the man.

I replied that he did seem to be a good-looking animal; but, said I, "he does not quite come up to the description of a horse I have read."

"Whose hos was it?" said he.

I replied it was the horse of Adonis.

He said he didn't know him; but, he added, "there is so many hosses stolen, that the descriptions are stuck up now pretty common."

To put him at his ease (for he seemed to think I suspected him of having stolen the horse), I told him the description I meant had been written some hundreds of years ago by Shakespeare, and repeated it:—

Round-hooft, short-joynted, fetlocks shag and long,
Broad breast, full eyes, small head, and nostrils wide,
High crest, short ears, straight legs, and passing strong,
Thin mane, thick tail, broad buttock, tender hide.

"'Squire," said he, "that will do for a song, but it ain't no p'ints of a good hos. Trotters nowadays go in all shapes, big heads and little heads, big eyes and little eyes, short ears or long ears, thick tail and no tail; so as they have sound legs, good l'in, good barrel, and good stifle, and wind, 'squire, and speed, well, they'll fetch a

price. Now, this animal is what I call a hos, 'squire ; he's got the p'int, he's stylish, he's close-ribbed, a free goer, kind in harness—single or double—a good feeder."

I asked him if being a good feeder was a desirable quality. He replied it was ; " of course," said he, " if your hos is off his feed, he ain't good for nothin'. But what's the use," he added, " of me telling you the p'int of a good hos ? You're a hos man, 'squire : you know."

" It seems to me," said I, " there is something the matter with that left eye."

" No, *sir*," said he, and with that he pulled down the horse's head, and, rapidly crooking his forefinger at the suspected organ, said, " see thar—don't wink a bit."

" But he should wink," I replied.

" Not unless his eye are weak," he said.

To satisfy myself, I asked the man to let me take the bridle. He did so, and, as soon as I took hold of it, the horse started off in a remarkable retrograde movement, dragging me with him into my best bed of hybrid roses. Finding we were trampling down all the best plants, that had cost at auction from three-and-sixpence to seven shillings apiece, and that the more I pulled the more he backed, I finally let him have his own way, and jammed him sternmost into our largest climbing rose that had been all summer prickling itself, in order to look as much like a vegetable porcupine as possible. This unexpected bit of satire in his rear changed his retrograde movement to a sidelong bound, by which he flirted off half the pots on the balusters, upsetting my gladioluses and tuberose in the pod, and leaving great splashes of mould, geraniums, and red pottery in the gravel walk. By this time his owner had managed to give him two pretty severe cuts with the whip which made him unmanageable, so I let him go.

We had a pleasant time catching him again, when he got among the Limabean poles ; but his owner led him back with a very self-satisfied expression.

" Playful, ain't he, 'squire ? "

I replied that I thought he was, and asked him if it was usual for his horse to play such pranks.

He said it was not. " You see, 'squire, he feels his oats, and hain't been out of the stable for a month. Use him, and he's as kind as a kitten."

With that he put his foot in the stirrup, and mounted. The animal really looked very well as he moved around the grass-plot, and, as Mrs. Sparrowgrass seemed to fancy him, I took a written guarantee that he was sound, and bought him. What I gave for him is a secret ; I have not even told Mrs. Sparrowgrass.

II

We had passed Chicken Island, and the famous house with the stone gable and the one stone chimney, in which General Washington slept, as he made it a point to sleep in every old stone house in Westchester county, and had gone pretty far on the road, past the cemetery, when Mrs. Sparrowgrass said suddenly, "Dear, what is the matter with your horse?"

As I had been telling the children all the stories about the river on the way, I managed to get my head pretty well inside of the carriage, and, at the time she spoke, was keeping a look-out in front with my back. The remark of Mrs. Sparrowgrass induced me to turn about, and I found the new horse behaving in a most unaccountable manner. He was going down hill with his nose almost to the ground, running the waggon first on this side and then on the other. I thought of the remark made by the man, and turning again to Mrs. Sparrowgrass, said, "Playful, isn't he?"

The next moment I heard something breaking away in front, and then the Rockaway gave a lurch and stood still. Upon examination I found the new horse had tumbled down, broken one shaft, gotten the other through the check-rein so as to bring his head up with a round turn, and besides had managed to put one of the traces in a single hitch around his off hind leg. So soon as I had taken all the young ones and Mrs. Sparrowgrass out of the Rockaway, I set to work to liberate the horse, who was choking very fast with the check-rein. It is unpleasant to get your fishing-line in a tangle when you are in a hurry for bites, but I never saw fishing-line in such a tangle as that harness. However, I set to work with a penknife, and cut him out in such a way as to make getting home by our conveyance impossible. When he got up, he was the sleepest-looking horse I ever saw.

"Mrs. Sparrowgrass," said I, "won't you stay here with the children until I go to the nearest farm-house?" Mrs. Sparrowgrass replied that she would.

Then I took the horse with me to get him out of the way of the children, and went in search of assistance. The first thing the new horse did when he got about a quarter of a mile from the scene of the accident was to tumble down a bank. Fortunately the bank was not over four feet high, but as I went with him, my trousers were rent in a grievous place. While I was getting the new horse on his feet again, I saw a coloured person approaching, who came to my assistance. The first thing he did was to pull out a large jack-knife, and the next thing he did was to open the new horse's mouth and run the blade two or three times inside of the new horse's gums. Then the new horse commenced bleeding.

"Dar, sah," said the man, shutting up his jack-knife, "ef't hadn't been for dat yer, your hos would a 'bin a goner."

"What was the matter with him?" said I. "Oh, he's only jis got de blind staggers, das all. Say," said he, before I was half indignant enough at the man who had sold me such an animal, "say, ain't your name Sparrowgrass?"

I replied that my name was Sparrowgrass.

"Oh," said he, "I knows you, I brung some fowls once down to you place. I heerd about you, and your hos. Dats the hos dats got de heaves so bad, heh! heh! You better sell dat hos."

I determined to take his advice, and employed him to lead my purchase to the nearest place where he would be cared for. Then I went back to the Rockaway, but met Mrs. Sparrowgrass and the children on the road coming to meet me. She had left a man in charge of the Rockaway. When we got to the Rockaway we found the man missing, also the whip and one cushion. We got another person to take charge of the Rockaway, and had a pleasant walk home by moonlight. I think a moonlight night delicious, upon the Hudson.

Does any person want a horse at a low price? A good stylish-looking animal, close-ribbed, good loin, and a good stifle, sound legs, with only the heaves and blind staggers, and a slight defect in one of his eyes? If at any time he slips his bridle and gets away, you can always approach him by getting on his left side. I will also engage to give a written guarantee that he is sound and kind, signed by the brother of his former owner.

LUCRETIA PEABODY HALE
1820-1900

THE SPIDER'S EYE

THERE are whispering galleries, where, if the ear is placed in a certain position, it takes in the sound of the lowest whisper from the opposite side of the room. But, to produce this effect, the architecture of the apartment must be of a peculiar nature, and, especially, the rules and laws of sound must be observed.

I have often thought that, were one wise enough, there might be found, in every room, a centre to which all sound must converge. Nay, that perhaps such a focus had already been discovered by some one who has wished to appear wiser than his neighbours, who has made use of some hitherto unknown scientific fact, and has on any one occasion, or on many occasions, thus made himself the centre of information.

These ideas occurred to my mind when I arrived the other night early at the theatre, and was for the time, literally, the only occupant of the house. I fell to marvelling at the skill of the architect who has been so successful in the acoustic arrangements of this theatre. Not a sound, so it is said, is lost from the stage upon any part of the house. The lowest sob of a dying heroine, in her very last agony, is heard as plainly by the occupant of the back seat of the amphitheatre, as are the thundering denunciations of the tragic actor in the wildest of gladiatorial scenes.

I wondered if this were one of those rules that worked both ways; if the stage performer, in a moment of silent by-play, could hear the sentimental whisper of the belle in the box opposite, as well as the noisy applause of the claqueur in the front seat. If so, the audience might become, to him, the peopled stage, filled with the varied and incongruous characters.

Then if art can produce such effects upon what we call an ethereal substance—if the waves of air can be compelled to carry their message only in the directions in which it is taught to go—what influence would such power have on more spiritual media? In other worlds, where it is not necessary for thoughts to express themselves in words, but where some more subtle power than that of air conveys ideas

from one being to another, it is possible that an inquiring being might place himself at some central point where he might gather in all the information that is afloat in such a spiritual existence.

Full of these thoughts, and my head, perhaps, a little bewildered by them, I passed unobserved into the orchestra, and ensconced myself in a little niche under the music-desk of the leader. I was surprised to find myself in a little cavity, from which there were loop-holes of observation into every part of the house, while there was a front view of the stage when the curtain should be raised. Seduced by the comfort of this little nook, and my speculations not being of the liveliest nature, it is not to be wondered at that I fell into a gentle sleep.

I was aroused presently by the bâton of the leader, struck with some force upon the desk over my head. I was aware, at the same time, of a whispering all around my ears, and an incessant noise, like that of aspen leaves in a summer breeze, which, in spite of its softness and delicacy, overpowered the sound of the loud orchestra. When I was able to recover myself, I began to find that I had indeed placed myself in the centre of the house ; not in the centre of sound, but, if I may so express myself, of sensation. I was not listening to the conversations, but suddenly found myself the confidant of the thoughts of all the occupants of this well-filled house. I was lost in the multiplicity of ideas that were poured in upon me, and endeavoured to concentrate myself upon one series of thoughts. I looked through my loop-holes, and presently selected one group towards which I might direct the opera-glass of my mental observation.

There sat the five Misses Seymour. We had always distinguished them as the tall one, the light-haired one, the one who painted in oils, the one who had been South, and the little one whom nobody knew anything about. This individuality had been our only guide after having engaged Miss Seymour for a dance, and this was sufficient. The one who painted in oils always refused to dance ; the one who had been South spoke with an accent, and said "*chuck'n*" and "*fush*," if the conversation turned upon the bill of fare ; and the others were distinguished by their personal appearance.

Now I felt anxious to discover more certainly which was which. I found, presently, that instead of contenting myself with the superficial layer of thought over my mind, created by the circumstances in which they were placed, I was penetrating into what they really were. A few minutes showed me what had been their occupations for the day, and what were their plans for the next. I saw, at once, all their regrets and ambitions.

It had been the day of Mrs. Jay's famous *matinée*. I had not been at the reception, but Frank Leslie had told me all about it,

and that all the Seymours were there ; and about Miss Seymour's fainting. I knew Frank was in love with one of the Miss Seymours, but I never had found out which, and I was not sure that Frank himself knew.

How suddenly did these five characters, whom before I had found it difficult to distinguish, stand out now with differing features. I saw Aurelia—that was the tall one—enter the drawing-room very stately in her beauty. No wonder that every one had turned round to look at her ; to admire her first, and then criticise her, because she seemed so cold and statue-like. But to-night she was going over the whole scene in her thoughts. I heard the throbbing of her heart as in memory she was bringing back the morning's events. She had refused to dance, because she was sure she should not have the strength to go through a polka. She had preferred to sink into a seat by the conservatory, and, upheld by the excitement of the music, to await the meeting.

Oh ! in this everyday world, where its repeated succession of events is gone through with in composure, how easy it is to control the wildest passions. A conventional smile and a stiff bow are the draperies that veil the intensest unspoken emotions. It was under this disguise that Miss Seymour was to greet Gerald Lawson. He went to Canton three years ago, and before he went she had promised to marry him. She promised one gay evening after "the German." She had been carried away by the moment. Ever since, all through the three years, she had been regretting it. It was a secret engagement. The untold feeling that had prompted it had never been aired, and died very soon for want of earth and light. To cold indifference for the man to whom she had promised herself, had succeeded an absolute aversion. What was worse, she loved another person. Aurelia Seymour loved Frank ! This very morning the news had reached her that the *Kumshan* was in from Canton. The passengers had arrived last night ; she was to meet Gerald at Mrs. Jay's this morning.

Frank Leslie seated himself by her. She was in the midst of a calm, cool conversation with him, when she saw a little commotion in the other corner of the room. Every one was greeting Mr. Lawson on his arriving home. He is making his way through the crowd : he comes to her, he bows ; Aurelia smiles.

But this was not all. He asked her if she would come into the conservatory. She had accompanied him there. Half hid by the branches of a camellia-tree all covered with white blossoms, she had said coldly, "Gerald, I cannot marry you." But Gerald had not received the word so coolly. He had burst out into passion. First he had exclaimed in wonder, next he could not believe her.

"Would she treat him so ungenerously? Was she a heartless flirt, a mere coquette?"

He told over his love that had been growing warmer all these three years; of his ambition that was to be crowned by her approval; of his lately gained wealth, valued only for her sake. Passionate words they were, and full of intense feeling; but hidden by the camellia, restrained and kept under from fear of observers. They were frequently interrupted, too.

"Thank you—ninety-nine days; very quick passage. Yes, I go back next week; no, I stay at home," were, with other sentences, thrown in, as answers to the different questions of those who did not know what they were interrupting.

But, at last, Aurelia broke away. Broke away! No; she accepted Middleton's proposal to go into the coffee-room, and left Gerald beneath the camellia.

As I watched her from my loop-holes I could tell that Aurelia was going over all this scene in her mind. While her eyes were fixed upon the stage, she recalled every word and gesture of Gerald's. Yet, his reproaches, his just complaints, hardly weighed upon her now. She was looking on the vacant seat beside her, and wondering when Frank would come and take it.

But Lilly, the light-haired one, her thoughts were rushing back to the wild, gay polkas of the morning. Now by Aurelia's side, now away again; she had danced continually till the last moment, and when they came to tell her the carriage was ready, and she must come away, she had fainted.

It was as she was going upstairs into the drawing-room, just before she and her sisters made their grand *entrée*, that Lilly had heard that Cousin Joe had not come home in the vessel with Gerald Lawson. He had gone to Europe by the overland route, and wild, mad fellow that he was, had determined to join the Russian troops in the Crimea.

"And be shot there for his pains," Frank Leslie added carelessly.

Cousin Joe hadn't come home! He didn't care to come home! He was going to be shot!

She could think of nothing else. She could not keep still; she could not talk placidly like the rest; she must dance wildly and passionately.

But a moment of reaction came. When the last strain of music had died away, all power of self-control had died away, too. No wonder that she had fainted! More wonder that she could recover herself; could resist her mother's entreaties, after all that dancing, to spare herself and stay from the opera.

Here she was, outwardly lively and radiant, chatting with

Lieutenant Preston, inwardly chafed at all this constraint, and wondering how it was Cousin Joe could stay so long away.

By her side sat Annette. It was the report that she had been sent South last winter to break up a desperate flirtation she was carrying on. However it was, I had always fancied Annette more than either of the other sisters. She had apparently less of our northern reserve, whether for good or evil, than the rest. She said just what she was thinking; danced when she liked; was insolent when she pleased.

To-night she seemed to me fretful. She was angry with Lilly for talking with Lieutenant Preston; and, indeed, I must not, in honour, reveal all I read in Annette's mind. If I found there her opinion of me; if, on the whole, it lowered my opinion of myself, I must take refuge in the old proverb, "Eavesdroppers never hear any good of themselves."

But there was Angelina; she was the one who "painted in oils" and she attracted me more than any of the others. There was about her an atmosphere of pleasure, within her an expression of delight, that accounted for the really sunny gleam upon her face. Something had made all the day happy for her. In the morning she had passed nearly all the time in Mrs. Jay's front drawing-room. The fine masterpieces of art, brought from Europe, make this apartment a true picture-gallery. But Angelina's pleasure, artist though she was, was not taken from the figures upon the walls. She walked up and down the room; she lingered awhile in one of the deep fauteuils; she paused before the paintings with Frank Leslie by her side. As she turned, at the theatre, now and then to the vacant seat behind her, next Aurelia's, her anticipation was not embittered by anxiety; she knew he would come in time. Oh, Frank! you did not tell me *all* that took place at Mrs. Jay's!

But, from all these observations, my thoughts were turned back to the stage by the influence of the little Sophie Seymour. She—about whom we knew nothing—she was the only one of the party entirely absorbed in the opera. Her eyes fixed upon the stage; her heart wrapt up in the intense story that was being enacted; her musical soul throbbing with the glorious chords that swelled out; her whole being reflected the opera.

So I turned me to the stage. My eyes fell first upon the substitute that the illness of Mademoiselle—— required for the night. Just now she was standing on one side, and as she drew her white glove closer *her* thoughts were going back to the scenes of the day.

Oh! what a little room she lived in! She was sitting in it when the message came from the manager to summon her to sing to-night! Her brother Franz was copying some music by her side; and now she is smiling at the recollection of the conversation that had followed upon her accepting the manager's unexpected proposal.

She had hastened to get out her last concert dress. It was new once—but oh ! would it answer now for the opera ?

Those very white kid gloves ! They had cost her her dinner.

“ Must I have new ones, Franz ? ” she had asked. “ If there were only time to have an old pair cleaned—if, indeed, I have any left worth cleaning ! ”

“ Never mind,” answered Franz, “ it is worth twenty dinners to have you hear the opera. I have longed so every night to have you there, and to have you on the stage ! my highest wishes are granted. Oh ! Marie, when you make a great point, I shall have to take my flute from my mouth and cry bravo ! ”

“ Oh, don't speak of the singing. It takes away my breath to think of myself upon the stage ! How I waste my time over dress and gloves ! I must practise ; I must be ready for the rehearsal.”

“ My poor Marie ! To-day, of all days, to go without dinner.”

“ Don't think of it ! When the manager ‘ pays up,’ oh, then, Franz ! we'll have dinners. Only part of the money must go to a new concert dress. When my last was new, I overheard, as I left the stage, a young girl saying, to her sister, I suppose, ‘ What an elegant dress ! ’ I wanted to stop and ask her if she thought it were worth going without meat for a month.”

And as Marie recalled these words to-night to her mind, I saw her look up and smile as she glanced over the house, and contrasted the showy dress she wore with the poor home she had left behind.

What a poor home it was, indeed ! What a contrast did the gay dress she arranged for the evening make with her room's poor adorning. The dress she thrust quickly away, and had devoted herself to the study of the music for evening. With her brother's assistance, she had prepared herself for the rehearsal, and had gone there with him.

The rehearsal was more alarming to her than the thought of the evening performance. There were the conductor's criticising eyes glaring at her ; the unsympathising glances of some of her stage companions—though many of them had come to her with words of kindly encouragement ; there was the silent, untenanted expanse of the theatre before her—none of the excitement of stage scenery, or the brilliancy of light and tinsel ; and she must force herself to think of her part, as a technical study of music, all the time she felt she was undergoing a severe criticism from Mademoiselle ——'s friends, who were comparing the newcomer's voice with that of their own ally.

But her thoughts were not sad. There was in her a gaiety and strength of spirit that bore her up. The brilliant scene gave her an excitement that helped her to bear the thought of her everyday

trials. It had been hard to work all day, preparing for the evening—hard for the mind and body—and she had lately lived on poor fare, and wanted the exercise upon which her physical constitution should support itself. At once these troubles were forgotten. Now was to come the duet with the prima donna.

No timidity restrained her now. She felt, at the moment, that her own voice was of worth only as it harmonised with the leading one. She forgot herself when she thought of that wonderful voice, when once she found her own mingled in its wonderful tones. Now she was supported by it through the whole piece; her own was subdued by it, and at last she felt herself inspired by it; it was no longer herself singing; she was carried away by the power of another, and lifted above herself.

All applauded the magnificent music and harmony; the *bravo* of Franz was for Marie alone.

At this time my interest was absorbed in my observation of the prima donna. I had perceived at first how indifferently she had entered upon the spirit of the music. Her companion had filled her mind with the meaning of its composer, and was striving to infuse into herself the interpretation that the prima donna would give to its glorious strains.

But the soul of the prima donna was away. It was in a heavily-curtained room, where there were luxury and elegance. Here she had all day been watching by the bedside of her sick child. She had collected round it everything that money could bring to soothe its sufferings. There were flowers in the greatest profusion; these were trophies of her last night's success; and on the table by the bedside she had heaped up her brilliant, gorgeous jewels, for their varied and glowing colours had served to amuse the child for a few minutes. She had sung to him music, that crowds would have collected to hear, had they been allowed. Only to soothe him, all the golden tones of her voice had poured out—now dropping in thrilling, sad melody, now in glad, happy, childish strains.

Nothing through the day could put to rest that one appeal which now was echoing in her ears: "Will nothing cool my throat!—my head burns!—only a few drops of water!" Over all the tones of the orchestra these words sounded and thrilled so in her ears, that only mechanically could the prima donna repeat the tones that were thrilling all the hearts to which they came.

At last the power of her own voice conquered herself, too. In the closing cadences—in those chords, triumphant and faith-bringing—for the moment her own sorrows melted away, and the thought of herself was lost in the inspiration of the grand, majestic intonations to which she was giving utterance. She was no longer a suffering woman; but her soul and her voice were sounding beneath the touch

of a great master-spirit, and giving out a glowing music, compelled by its master-power.

What an enthusiasm ! what an excitement ! As with the opera-singer on the stage, so with all the audience ; all separate joy and grief, all individual passions were swallowed up, and carried away by this all-absorbing inspiration, and lost in its mighty whirl.

For me, now, there was but one character to follow. How grandly the stage-heroine went through her part ! As if to crush all other emotion, she flung herself into the character she was portraying, and went through it wildly and passionately.

She overshadowed her little rival—for Marie was her rival, according to the plot of the opera—now threatening, now protecting her, as she was led on by the spirit of the play. Marie shrunk before her, or was inspired by her ; and her delicate, entreating figure helped the pathos of her voice. Marie, by this time, had utterly lost herself in her admiration of the great genius who was so impressing her. She gave out her own voice as an offering to this great power. For its sake she would have found it impossible to make any mistake in her own singing, or do anything with her own voice, but just place it at the service of her companion, as a foil to her grand and glorious one.

When in the play the heroine gave up—as she does in the play—her own life for the sake of her rival, the act became more magnanimous and wondrous as being performed for this little delicate Marie, who shrank from so great a sacrifice.

The prima donna gained all the applause. Indeed, it was right—for it was her power that had called out all that was great in her delicate rival. It was she who had inspired her, and made her forget herself and everything but the notes she must give out, true and pure.

They were both called before the stage after the grand closing scene ; or rather the prima donna drew forward the retiring Marie. Shouts and peals of enthusiasm greeted the queen of song. But her moment of exaltation had passed away. Over and over again she was repeating to herself, " Will they never let me go home ? Perhaps he is dying now—he wants me—I am too late ! "

She was at the summit of her greatness ; but oh ! it was painful to see her there—to see how she would have hushed all those wild, enthusiastic shouts for the sake of one fresh childish tone ; how she would have exchanged all those bursts of passion to make sure of a healthy throb in that child's pulse. All this enthusiasm was not new to her. It was part of her existence. It was a restraint upon her now, but she could not have done without it. It was the excitement which would serve to sustain her through another night of watching.

Marie, too, was giving her meed of praise, as she followed her across the stage. She did not think of taking to herself one shout of the enthusiasm, any more than she would have thought of appropriating one flower from the bouquets which were showered before her. There was, indeed, one share of the plaudits which belonged to her entirely. This came from Franz—for I recognised him by his unruly stamping, and unrestrained applause. His thoughts were only for Marie; he was filled with pride at the manner in which she bore herself—at her simple carriage, and modest demeanour. His praise was all for Marie. The famous opera-singer, whom he had heard night after night, was forgotten, in his pride for his little sister.

I sank back into my niche. Varied figures floated before me, and bewildered me.

I have often looked at spiders with deep interest. It is said that their eyes are made up of many facets. What a bewildering world, then, is presented to their view! It is no wonder that, as I have seen them, they have appeared so irresolute in their motions, darting here and there. A world of so many faces stand around the spider, towards which shall he turn his attention? He lives, as it were, in the middle of a kaleidoscope, where many figures are repeated, and form one great figure, and each separate section is like its neighbour. Which of these varied yet too similar pictures shall he choose?

At least this is my idea of the sensations of a spider; but I am not enough of a naturalist to say that it is correct. How is it? When a fly enters that web, which is divided into a symmetry similar to that of the facets of a spider's eye, does mine host, the spider, see twenty-five thousand similar flies approaching, his organ of vision standing as the centre? What a cosmorama there is before him? What a luxurious repast might not his imagination offer him, if his memory did not recall the plain truth that dull reality has so often disclosed to him! We cannot wonder that the spider should lead, apparently, so solitary a life, since his eyes have the power of producing a whole ballroom from the form of one lady visitor. Not one, but twenty-five thousand Robert Bruces inspired the Scottish spider to that homely instance of perseverance, which served for an example for a king. As he hangs his drapery from one cornice to another, the prismatic scenes that come before him serve to lengthen that life which might seem to be cut off before its time. It is not one, but twenty-five thousand brooms which advance to destroy his airy home; to invade his household gods, and bring to the ground that row of bluebottles which his magnifying power of vision has transformed from one to twenty-five thousand! nay, more, perhaps!

Out in the air, as he swings his delicate cordage from one tree to another, he does not need to wear a gorgeous plumage ; this old dusty coat and uncomely figure, that make a child shrink and cry out, these may well be forgotten by him who looks into life through prismatic glasses. Every drop of rain wears for him its Iris drapery ; the dew on the flowers becomes a jewelled circlet ; and the dazzling pictures brought by the sunbeams outshine and transform for him his own dusky garment.

I thought of my friend, the spider, as into my web of thought came such numerous images. They were not alike in form—and so were more distracting. More than I can mention or number had visited me there ; had excited my interest for a moment, and been crowded out by another new image. Yes, it was like looking into a kaleidoscope where there were infinite repetitions. In all were the same master-colours and forms. All were swayed by passions that made an under-current beneath a great outward calm. All were wearing an outward form that strove each to resemble the other ; not to appear strange or odd. So they flitted before me, coming into shape, and departing from it as they came within and left my reach.

I only roused myself to see the various characters, that had presented themselves on the stage of my mind, return again into their everyday costumes. They passed out of the focus of my observation into their several forms in which they walk through common life. Putting on their opera-cloaks, their paletots, they put on, for me, that mark that hides the inner life, and the veil that conceals all hidden passions.

It is said that there is, no longer, romance in real life. But the truth is that we live the romance that former ages told and sang. The magic carpet of the Arabian tales, the mirror that brought to view most distant objects, have come out of poetry, and present themselves in the prosaic form of the steam locomotive and the electric telegraph.

Nowadays, everybody has travelled to some distant land, has seen, with everybody's eyes, the charmed isles and lotos shores that used to be only in books. In this lively, changing age everybody is living his own romance. And this is why the romance of story grows pale and is thrown aside. A domestic sketch of everyday life, of outward calm and simplicity, soothes the unrest of active life, and charms more than three volumes of wild incident that cannot equal the excitement that every reader is enacting in his own drama.

There were as many romances in life around me, that night, as there were persons in the theatre. I had not merely learned that the cold Aurelia was passionately in love, that the gay Lilly was

broken-hearted, that the frank Annette was silly, and Angelina and Frank engaged before it was out. Beside all this, I had learned the trials and joys of many others whom I know only in this way ; and I left the theatre the last, as I had come in the first.

The next morning I returned to business affairs again. It was a particularly pressing morning. The steamer was in. I had not even time to think of my last night's experiences. Only at the corner of a street I met an acquaintance, whose smiling face amazed me. I knew that all last evening his mind had been preoccupied with the truly critical state of his affairs, and I was at a loss how to greet him. He hurried away from my embarrassment. I had more than one of these encounters ; but it was not till the labours of the day were over that I understood how my knowledge of mankind had been lately increased. I went, in the evening, to a small party where I knew I should meet the Seymours. I fell in there with Aurelia first. She was as cold and as stately as ever. I entered into conversation with her, feeling that I could touch the keynote of her life. But no ; she was as chilling to me as ever ; nothing warmed her—nothing elicited from her the slightest spark. Sometimes she looked at me a little wonderingly, as if I were talking in some style unusual to me ; as if my remarks were, in a manner, impertinent ; but, in the end, I left her to her icy coldness.

As for Lilly, she appeared to the world, in general, as gay as ever. I fancied I detected a slight listlessness as she accompanied her partner into the dancing-room for the sixth polka. It was no great help with me in talking to Annette, that I knew she was a fool. I won no thanks from Frank or Angelina when I manoeuvred that they should have a little flirtation in the library. For some reason they were determined that their engagement should not be apparent, and I was reproached afterwards by Frank for my clumsiness, and received, in return, no confidences to make up for the reproach.

On the whole I passed a disagreeable evening. I had a feeling all the time that I was in the presence of smothered volcanoes, and a consciousness that I had the advantage of the rest of the world in knowing all its secret history. This became, at last, almost insupportable.

There was no opera this night. The next day it was announced that Mademoiselle —— would take her accustomed place in the performance. I went early to the theatre, and found, to my amazement, there had been some changes made in the orchestra ; the prompter's box had been enlarged, and my newly discovered niche had been rendered inaccessible and almost entirely filled in ! In vain did I attempt to find some other position that might correspond to it. I only attracted the attention of the early comers to the theatre. I was obliged to return to my old position of an outside

observer of life, and see, quite unoccupied, that centre of all observation which I had enjoyed myself so much two nights before ; over which the leader of the orchestra was unconsciously waving his bâton.

I made some inquiries for Marie. One day I went down the quiet, secluded street, where they told me she lived. I walked up and down before the house. It was very tantalising to feel that I had no excuse for approaching her. Of all the figures that had assembled around me that night, hers had remained the most distinct upon my memory. For, through the whole, she had retained an outward bearing which had corresponded with what I could see of her inward self. Even when she threw herself most earnestly into her part, she had scarcely seemed to lose herself. She had always remained a simple, self-devoted girl.

I longed to see more of her. I wanted to see her in that quiet home. While I was wandering up and down, I abused the forms of society which would make my beginning an acquaintance with her so difficult. I saw Franz, brother Franz, the flute-player, leave the house. Scarcely conscious of what I was doing, I went, as soon as he had left the street, to the door which was open to all comers : to the house which contained more than one family. I made my way upstairs and knocked at a door to which Franz's card was attached.

It was opened by Marie. She stood before me with a handkerchief tied over her head, and a broom in her hand, but she looked, to me, as beautiful as she had done behind the glare of the footlights. Her simplicity was here even more fascinating.

She held the door partly open, while I, to recover myself, asked for Franz. She told me he was gone out, but would return soon, if I would wait for him. I was never less anxious to see any person than then to see Franz, but I could not resist entering the room, and this, in spite of the apologetic air of Marie. The room looked as neat as I had imagined it, seeing it from the mirror of Marie's mind. I should say it scarcely needed that broom which still remained expectantly in Marie's hand. A piano, spider-legged, in the number and thinness of these supports, stood at one side of the room, weighed down with classic-looking music. A bouquet, that had been given by the hand of the prima donna to Marie, stood upon the piano.

Otherwise it was a common enough looking room. Some remark being necessary, I inquired of Franz's health, and hoped he was not wearing himself out with hard work ; I had seen him regularly at the opera. Marie encouraged me with regard to her brother's health, and still, the opera even did not serve to open a conversation with Marie.

Then, indeed, did I wish that I was the hero of a novel. I might have told her I was writing an opera, and have asked her to study for its heroine. I might have retired, and sent her, directly and mysteriously, a grand piano of the very grandest scale. Or, I might have asked her to sit down to that old-fashioned instrument, and have asked her to let me hear her sing, for my nieces were in need of a new teacher. I might have engaged Franz, with promise of a high salary, to write me the music of songs, or a new sonata. But I had neither the salary nor the nieces. I had not even an excuse for standing there. It was very foolish of me, but I could not help feeling that it was exceedingly impertinent of me to be there.

Instead of informing Marie that I was intimately acquainted with her, that I had shared every emotion of her soul, on the exciting opera night, I stated that I could call again upon brother Franz. I regretted, at the same time, that I had not my card, and left the room with a courteous bow of dismissal from Marie.

I have walked that way very often. Once or twice I have seen Marie at the window, when she has not seen me. But I have not attempted to visit her again. Of what use is it for me, then, to have such a knowledge of her, when she does not have a similar one sympathetic with me? She has not sung in public of late, and I do not know the reason why she has not.

My friends are fond of asking me why I, every night, sit in a different place at the theatre; and why I have such a fancy for a seat in the midst of the trumpets of the orchestra, and directly under the leader. I am striving to make new acoustic discoveries.

But I dare not state in what theatre it is that my point of observation can be found, nor ask of the management to make an alteration in the position of the orchestra, lest some night I should be observed and expose all the secrets of my breast to a less confidential observer.

RICHARD MALCOLM JOHNSTON

1822-1898

THE VARIOUS LANGUAGES OF BILLY MOON

I

Nor all, and not a majority, of personal combats in the far South forty years ago, at court grounds and muster fields, sprang from personal hostilities, previous or sudden. They were resorted to often as a trial of superior strength, agility, or endurance. In such encounters, one who would seek for a pistol, a knife, or even a walking-stick, was considered unmanly. Not thus, however, at least not commonly, he who, when overcome and prostrate, cried "Enough." Such conduct was understood merely as an admission, technically termed "word," that the defeated yielded for the present only, and with reserve of right and intention to renew the combat in other circumstances which might occur, whether on that same or some subsequent day. The victor was expected to suspend his blows at this admission. Sometimes when the bottom man refused to yield, and seemed to prefer being beaten into a jelly, bystanders, somewhat before such result, would drag off the top man. Then both combatants, though with blackened eyes and bruised faces, panting and hobbling, would repair to the grocery, take a social grog, and, with mutual compliments, have a cordial understanding to repeat the fight at some convenient time after.

This preface was due to Mr. Oglethorpe Josh Green, whose conduct upon a certain occasion might otherwise be somewhat misunderstood.

One other item—as a postscript, as it were, to the above—I should mention. In those times, many country people of the humbler and less cultivated sort, when mention was made of a person afflicted with a native incurable infirmity, bodily or mental, usually spoke of him or her as of the neuter gender, employing the pronoun *it*.

Mr. (Oglethorpe) Josh Green, so styled to distinguish him from his cousin of that name in Elbert, had whipped out everything in his section, and in search of other conquests he once came some miles

southward. It was muster-day for the Dukesborough battalion. A few from the upper borders of the county had heard of his exploits, and one or two had seen him theretofore. A man like him, however, needed not to have friends, or even acquaintances, as, when a fight was to be made up, an entire stranger could easily obtain backers who would see to the maintenance of fair play.

When the muster was over, and O. J. G. (as he sometimes called himself, and was called by others, for short) had looked calmly upon several fights, he seemed to be disgusted.

"You people down here don't 'pear to know how to fight," said he. "It 'pears like you want to have somebody that do know how for to come down here and larn you."

It was a voice loud, harsh, powerful. People looked at him. Indeed, he had already attracted much attention. About thirty or thirty-two years of age, five feet eleven, weighing one hundred and sixty, or maybe more, dark-skinned, his black hair cut short, without an ounce of surplus flesh from his head to his feet, he seemed as if he had been wrought out of iron. As he walked up and down, composedly uttering challenges, there did not seem to be a likelihood that he could find one to encounter him.

Bob Hatchett did say that but for his fatigue (having just now had a turn with Bill Giles, and got Bill's word) he would give him a trial, and take a few—jes' a few—of his lessons.

The warrior had money, and he exhibited it as a temptation. Holding forth his buckskin purse, he said, after beginning with a dollar, and gradually ascending :

"Gentlemen, in this here money-puss is four dollars, lackin' sevenpence. Two dollars and a half o' that money it would be my desires to put into the money-puss of the man that can git my word in a fight here to-day. The dollar one and nine that would be left would be enough to take me back home, and which, in sich a case, arfter sich fightin' as I seen here, I shouldn't desires to leave it no more, leastways to come this way."

Such as that looked like a shame. Finally, Jack Hall, who lived on Shoulder-bone, said he couldn't stand it. Jack himself was a man of much power, though he might not have encountered O. J. G. without apprehension.

"Stranger," said Jack, "you 'pear like you—you jes' a-spilin' for a fight."

"That's ezactly what I am, sir," answered the stranger. "I'm a-spilin' bad. I hain't fit in so long that I'm gittin' badly spiled. You hit what's jes' the matter with me, the same as ef you was a doctor."

"Jes' so ; and you would wish to lay down them two dollars and a half, sure enough, would you ? "

"Here they are, sir, ready for you to git; and when sich a lookin' man as you do git 'em, my calkilation will be to move clean away—to some disolate island."

"Jes' so." Jack looked at him and reflected. "I ain't ezactly in fix to-day myself; but"—he paused, took out his purse, and counted his money—"I hain't but a dollar, half, and sevenpence. Ef the boys will help me make up the rest, I'll fetch a man here that'll—that'll go to school to you for a while. I won't be gone more'n ten or fifteen minutes."

Certainly the balance can be made up; there it is already. Good gracious! the idea of a whole battalion, as it were, being run off its own battle-field by one man, and he a stranger!

Jack went to look for his man. Oglethorpe Josh the while stroked his head, screwed his jaws, felt his muscles, and seemed to smell the battle anear.

II

Inside of the time demanded, Jack was seen coming up the street. Slightly ahead of him, looking back eagerly at Jack's earnest gesticulations, walked a youth.

"Why, ef it ain't Billy Moon!" said Bob Hatchett and others. "Why, Jack Hall! Billy's too young to cope with that man."

"Jes' so, boys: never mind."

They came up, and Billy looked inquiringly at Jack and the rest. He was full six feet high, but would have weighed not more than one hundred and forty pounds. He was straight as an arrow—straighter, in fact; for his back was slightly swayed. Lithe, sinuous, tense without constraint, his long arms seemed well capable of striking and of grappling. His broad-brimmed hat sat jauntily on a side of his head. His light hair hung in curls even below his neck, and his blue eyes fairly danced with fiery glee. He did not seem to be over one-and-twenty years old.

"Is that your man?" asked Oglethorpe, curiously contemplating him.

"That's him," answered Jack.

"Well, my young friend, you don't want your mammy to know you when you go home to-night, eh? Your desires is to git to the old lady onbeknownst like this evenin', eh!"

Billy said not a word, but after signs from Jack smiled, and nodded his head gaily.

"How do you fight?"

Billy, after looking at Jack for a few moments, made several mock strokes with his fists, imaginary grapplings with his arms, kickings with his legs, and then seized his own throat with one hand, and placed the thumb of the other into the corner of one of his eyes.

Oglethorpe Josh looked at these actions piercingly. Turning upon Jack, he said: "Who's this you fotch here? What is he?"

"It's Billy Moon," answered a bystander—one of those chosen as stake-holder. "He's as respectable a man, sir, as any in this country, or anywheres else, exceptin' that he's deaf and dumb."

"Deef and dumb!" said Oglethorpe. "Ain't he a egiot?"

"Egiot! No, sir: no egiot; got much sense as you, or anybody else on this ground, and as much of a gentleman."

"Jes' so," said Jack Hall.

Oglethorpe scanned Billy over and over carefully. Scratching his head, he scanned him again. He looked down and reflected. After reflection he raised his head, but did not seem as if, even when he began to talk, he had reached a definite conclusion.

"Gentlemen—I shall—that is, I shall—not—yes—no—in case, yes—that is—gentlemen—I—I shall—ah—I shall not fight it."

Oh, now! ah, now! yes, now! That did look like a fellow comin' all the way down from Oglethorpe and openin' a school for teachin' people how to fight!

Oglethorpe reflected again, looked at Billy's smiling face, and reflected yet again. Then he resolved for good and all. He said, firmly:

"No sirs. I shall not fight it, gentlemen; and, gentlemen, I'll give you my reasons. You see, if me and it fights, one or t'other of us is got to git whipped, in the course o' time more or less. Now, ef I whip *it*, it can't holler, and I sha'n't know it air whipped. That'll be onfair for *it*. Then, agin, gentlemen, and which I shouldn't by no means look for—but nobody, exceptin' the good Lord, know the futer, 'specially in things like *it*—then agin, I say, ef it *should* whip *me*, and I holler, it—it—it couldn't *hear* me; and that, you see, gentlemen, would be onfair for me. Gentlemen, no: Gentlemen, I shall not fight it."

After the explosion ensuing upon this determined refusal, and some discussion as to its import and most proper consequences, it was decided at last, with entire concurrence on the part of Oglethorpe Josh, that it would be fair to regard the money advanced, not exactly as won by Billy, nor as constituting a drawn bet, but that Billy—for Jack said it should be Billy's interest, and not his own should have half the deposit of Oglethorpe Josh.

When Jack had communicated this decision to Billy, the brightness in an instant fled from his face, and he glanced around resentfully upon all. Then he looked upon the ground for a moment thoughtfully, putting his hand to his ear. Then he raised his head, his face putting on a conditional smile, looked at Oglethorpe, hugged himself, twisted his legs about, made a long mark upon the ground, struck his left forefinger with his right, and uttering several guttural

sounds from his throat, looked at Jack as if he were not yet entirely through with giving expression to his ideas.

Oglethorpe watched Billy's actions with earnest and compassionate interest. Said he: "What do it want? Ain't it satisfied? Ef it ain't, let it take all the money. Sooner than worry the poor thing, I'd let it have all I got. I'd——"

"Jes' so, jes' so, I know," said Jack. "But that ain't what Billy's arfter."

"Well what is it arfter? I can't see from them doin's what it is arfter."

"Jes' so; but me and him's neighbours, and always has been, and we understands one another same as ef Billy could talk. Billy's arfter a wrastle with you, stranger."

"A wrastle with me!"

"Jes' so; and he say ef you'll give him a wrastle, jes' a friendly wrastle, you mind, you may have a dollar more o' your money, no matter which gits flung; and ef you don't he'll have some more words to say to you."

"Words!" ejaculated Oglethorpe. "You call them things words! Words! more words! Them things was its langwidges, was they?" Then Mr. Oglethorpe Josh Green grinned somewhat, and the iron in his frame seemed to begin to soften.

"Jes' so," answered Jack; "and Billy's got more langwidges than you ever heerd of."

"More words, and in various landwidges," said O. J. G., thoughtfully. "And they means it want a wrastle, and ef it can't git it, it'll have more words in more warios langwidges."

Then Mr. O. J. G. regarded Billy with the most intense scrutiny. It was evident that he was again doubtful, but, seemingly to avoid the necessity of further remarks in other unknown tongues, he concluded to acquiesce in Billy's wishes.

"Very well, then," he said. "But, gentlemen, I'm agin this thing, and I wants it onderstood that ef it git hurt, I ain't responchible."

Everybody said that was right.

Then they stripped themselves.

III

"What hold do it want?" asked Mr. Oglethorpe Josh Green.

Billy, when the question was made known to him by Jack, raised and let fall first his right arm then his left, shook his head contemptuously, then unwrapped from his finger an invisible rag, and threw it upon the ground.

"What kind o' words was them?" asked O. J. G.

"Them words," answered Jack, "them's that Billy say he don't keer, not even to the wrappin' of his fingers, which hold you give him, right or left."

"Yes, I see it were somethin' about—about fingers."

Mr. O. slowly scraped his upper lip with his lower teeth.

"And ef I don't wrastle with it, you say—it'll—have yit more—words, and prob'ly in yit more various langwidges?"

"Jes' so."

"Well, gentlemen," he said, resignedly; "'member, gentlemen, I'm agin it, and both tharfore and wharfore I ain't to be responsible."

Certainly not, unanimously.

They were hitched. Jack Hall was to give the word, with a simultaneous nod to Billy. Billy's eye was on Jack, bright as a rattlesnake's when on the point of striking.

"Go!" said Jack.

Billy, instantaneously detecting, from the feel of his adversary, which was his stronger side, quick as lightning swayed his back yet more, slid himself an inch or two aside, brought his right knee-joint against Oglethorpe's left, and, simultaneously with pressure there, and a resistless impulsion with his left arm, adroitly tripped, with his left, Oglethorpe's right foot. The part of Oglethorpe that was likely to strike the ground first was his head. But Billy, as he was descending, softened the fall by hopping, with the agility of a greyhound, astraddle of his body, which barely touched the earth. There, holding Oglethorpe for a moment in his arms, flinging back from his eyes his long locks, he smiled in his face as a person does sometimes upon a child whom he has thrown up into the air playfully, and caught safely on the return. Then, when both had risen, he brushed him carefully with his hand and his handkerchief.

Omitting the numberless sayings, some of them interesting, in that crowd, now numbering a couple of hundreds or more, I confine myself to the main actors.

"Well, I *didn't* fight it!" said Oglethorpe, contemplating Billy with yet enhanced interest. "Ef it could onderstand me," he continued, hesitatingly, "my desires would be to corngratilate it, as it's the first thing that ever laid *my* back on the ground."

Then he extended his hand partially, which Billy, when made aware of his intention, seized, and cordially shook. Oglethorpe the while grinned, felt the water come into his eyes, smote his knees together, and, when Billy had let his hand go, held it up, letting it hang loosely, regarded it for a moment as something entirely foreign to himself, gradually pulled its fingers apart with his other hand, and seemed gratified and somewhat surprised that such a thing could be done.

Turning his eyes to him again, he asked, heavily, "Can it drink? Do it ever take a drink?"

"Certainly. Not as a habit, but in a social way."

"It would be my desires, then, to give it a treat. Tell it that I desires to treat it."

In the answer that Billy made to Jack's announcement of Oglethorpe's intentions, among other signs which he made was a pointing contemptuously toward the crowd, and then violently poking himself on the breast, as if he would commit suicide, for want of a bodkin, with a bare forefinger, gibbering the while in his throat, not loudly, but passionately.

"My gawnamighty!" exclaimed Oglethorpe, his tongue becoming now so heavy that he could not utter quite articulately himself. "What kind o' wordth wath them?"

"Them words," answered Jack, with the seriousness of a person who had spent his years mainly in the interpretation of foreign, especially dead and occult, languages—"Them words was this: Billy say that whisky is a thing he seldom teches."

"Thildom tetheth," repeated Oglethorpe, thoughtfully, as if he would fain learn something of these strange tongues.

"But that yit he hain't got no partickler predigice agin whisky, nor takin' of a drink hisself sometimes with a friend, or people he likes, providin' that they won't want him to carry it too fur, and——"

"No partickler predithith agin whithky," said Oglethorpe, recollectingly, his mind evidently delaying upon these words, and not following Jack—at least not keeping up with him.

"But——" began Jack.

"Oh, but!" Oglethorpe's lower jaw began to hang somewhat heavily, and all his iron was gradually turning to lead.

"Jes' so," resumed Jack. "Billy say that he feel like it would be a disgrace on hisself, and on the neighbourhood in gener'l, ef a stranger was to come here among us, and we was to let him do the treatin'. He say, as for sich onpoliteness as that, he warn't raised to it hisself, and as he's now a man growed up, he ain't goin' to begin on it at this time o' day; and furthersomere——"

"On-per-lite-neth! fur-ther-tho-more!" repeated Oglethorpe, in a low voice.

"Jes' so: and furthersomere, Billy say, ef you'll jine with him, and at his expense, he'll spend the rest o' the money in a gener'l treat."

Oglethorpe waited a moment, not sure that Jack was quite through with his translations.

"Them—ah, them wath ith langwitheth, wath they?"

"They was; his very words."

"And ef I don't agree to 'em, I th'pothe he'll be arfter uthin' yit more wariouth oneth?"

"Jes' so."

"I givth it up, then."

They all repaired to Fan's grocery. Billy laid his money on the counter, and the treat was accepted heartily all around.

"Gentlemen," then said Oglethorpe, "I'm sorry to part from you; but my business calls me, and I must bid you farewell."

Taking one more earnest, studious look at Billy, he thrust his hands into his pocket. Then saying to Jack Hall, "Tell it farewell for me," he immediately turned, left the grocery, and shortly afterward the town.

From this time Mr. Oglethorpe Josh Green began to keep himself more at or about his home, and to grow more quiet and meditative. Occasionally, when he was at the court-house, or Wright's store, and others had been telling of the strange things they had seen in foreign parts, after listening with doubtful interest to their narrations, he would point with his mere thumb vaguely and distantly toward the far South, and calling to mind what in the times when *he* was a traveller he had seen, say about thus:

"Gentlemen, it were a kind of a egiot; and it were grippy as a wise, and it were supple as a black-snake, and it were strong as a mule and a bull both putten together. And, gentlemen," he would add, "egiot as it were, it was smarter'n any man ever *I* see; and *as* for its langwidges—well, gentlemen, they wa'n't no end to its warious langwidges."

EDWARD EVERETT HALE

1822-1909

THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY

I SUPPOSE that very few casual readers of the *New York Herald* of August 13, 1863, observed, in an obscure corner, among the "Deaths," the announcement :

"NOLAN. Died, on board U.S. Corvette *Levant*, Lat. 2° 11' S., Long. 131° W., on the 11th of May, PHILIP NOLAN."

I happened to observe it, because I was stranded at the old Mission House in Mackinaw, waiting for a Lake Superior steamer which did not choose to come, and I was devouring to the very stubble all the current literature I could get hold of, even down to the deaths and marriages in the *Herald*. My memory for names and people is good, and the reader will see, as he goes on, that I had reason enough to remember Philip Nolan. There are hundreds of readers who would have paused at that announcement, if the officer of the *Levant* who reported it had chosen to make it thus : "Died, May 11, THE MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY." For it was as "The Man Without a Country" that poor Philip Nolan had generally been known by the officers who had him in charge during some fifty years, as, indeed, by all the men who sailed under them. I dare say there is many a man who has taken wine with him once a fortnight, in a three years' cruise, who never knew that his name was "Nolan," or whether the poor wretch had any name at all.

There can now be no possible harm in telling this poor creature's story. Reason enough there has been till now, ever since Madison's administration went out in 1817, for very strict secrecy, the secrecy of honour itself, among the gentlemen of the navy who have had Nolan in successive charge. And certainly it speaks well for the *esprit de corps* of the profession, and the personal honour of its members, that to the press this man's story has been wholly unknown—and, I think, to the country at large also. I have reason

to think, from some investigations I made in the Naval Archives when I was attached to the Bureau of Construction, that every official report relating to him was burned when Ross burned the public buildings at Washington. One of the Tuckers, or possibly one of the Watsons, had Nolan in charge at the end of the war; and when, on returning from his cruise, he reported at Washington to one of the Crowninshields—who was in the Navy Department when he came home—he found that the Department ignored the whole business. Whether they really knew nothing about it, or whether it was a “Non mi ricordo,” determined on as a piece of policy, I do not know. But this I do know, that since 1817, and possibly before, no naval officer has mentioned Nolan in his report of a cruise.

But, as I say, there is no need for secrecy any longer. And now the poor creature is dead, it seems to me worth while to tell a little of his story, by way of showing young Americans of to-day what it is to be A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY.

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Philip Nolan was as fine a young officer as there was in the “Legion of the West,” as the Western division of our army was then called. When Aaron Burr made his first dashing expedition down to New Orleans in 1805, at Fort Massac, or somewhere above on the river, he met, as the Devil would have it, this gay, dashing, bright young fellow; at some dinner-party, I think. Burr marked him, talked to him, walked with him, took him a day or two’s voyage in his flatboat, and, in short, fascinated him. For the next year, barrack-life was very tame to poor Nolan. He occasionally availed himself of the permission the great man had given him to write to him. Long, high-worded, stilted letters the poor boy wrote and rewrote and copied. But never a line did he have in reply from the gay deceiver. The other boys in the garrison sneered at him, because he sacrificed in this unrequited affection for a politician the time which they devoted to Monongahela, hazard, and high-low-jack. Bourbon, euchre, and poker were still unknown. But one day Nolan had his revenge. This time Burr came down the river not as an attorney seeking a place for his office, but as a disguised conqueror. He had defeated I know not how many district attorneys; he had dined at I know not how many public dinners; he had been heralded in I know not how many *Weekly Arguses*, and it was rumoured that he had an army behind him and an empire before him. It was a great day—his arrival—to poor Nolan. Burr had not been at the fort an hour before he sent for him. That evening he asked Nolan to take him out in his skiff, to show him a canebrake or a cottonwood tree, as he said—really to

seduce him ; and by the time the sail was over, Nolan was enlisted body and soul. From that time, though he did not yet know it, he lived as A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY.

What Burr meant to do I know no more than you, dear reader. It is none of our business just now. Only, when the grand catastrophe came, and Jefferson and the House of Virginia of that day undertook to break on the wheel all the possible Clarences of the then House of York, by the great treason trial at Richmond, some of the lesser fry in that distant Mississippi Valley, which was farther from us than Puget's Sound is to-day, introduced the like novelty on their provincial stage ; and, to while away the monotony of the summer at Fort Adams, got up, for *spectacles*, a string of courts-martial on the officers there. One and another of the colonels and majors were tried, and, to fill out the list, little Nolan, against whom, Heaven knows, there was evidence enough—that he was sick of the service, had been willing to be false to it, and would have obeyed any order to march anywhere with any one who would follow him had the order been signed “By command of His Exc. A. Burr.” The courts dragged on. The big flies escaped—rightly, for all I know. Nolan was proved guilty enough, as I say. Yet you and I would never have heard of him, reader, but that, when the president of the court asked him at the close whether he wished to say anything to show that he had always been faithful to the United States, he cried out in a fit of frenzy :

“Damn the United States ! I wish I may never hear of the United States again !”

I suppose he did not know how the words shocked old Colonel Morgan, who was holding the court. Half the officers who sat in it had served through the Revolution, and their lives, not to say their necks, had been risked for the very idea which he so cavalierly cursed in his madness. He, on his part, had grown up in the West of those days, in the midst of “Spanish plot,” “Orleans plot,” and all the rest. He had been educated on a plantation where the finest company was a Spanish officer or a French merchant from Orleans. His education, such as it was, had been perfected in commercial expeditions to Vera Cruz, and I think he told me his father once hired an Englishman to be a private tutor for a winter on the plantation. He had spent half his youth with an older brother, hunting horses in Texas, and, in a word, to him “United States” was scarcely a reality. Yet he had been fed by “United States” for all the years since he had been in the army. He had sworn on his faith as a Christian to be true to “United States.” It was “United States” which gave him the uniform he wore, and the sword by his side. Nay, my poor Nolan, it was only because “United States” had picked you out first as one of her

own confidential men of honour that "A. Burr" cared for you a straw more than for the flatboat men who sailed his ark for him. I do not excuse Nolan; I only explain to the reader why he damned his country, and wished he might never hear her name again.

He heard her name but once again. From that moment, September 23, 1807, till the day he died, May 11, 1863, he never heard her name again. For that half-century and more he was a man without a country.

Old Morgan, as I said, was terribly shocked. If Nolan had compared George Washington to Benedict Arnold, or had cried "God save King George!" Morgan would not have felt worse. He called the court into his private room, and returned in fifteen minutes, with a face like a sheet, to say:

"Prisoner, hear the sentence of the Court! The Court decides, subject to the approval of the President, that you never hear the name of the United States again."

Nolan laughed. But nobody else laughed. Old Morgan was too solemn, and the whole room was hushed dead as night for a minute. Even Nolan lost his swagger in a moment. Then Morgan added:

"Mr. Marshal, take the prisoner to Orleans in an armed boat, and deliver him to the naval commander there."

The marshal gave his orders and the prisoner was taken out of court.

"Mr. Marshal," continued old Morgan, "see that no one mentions the United States to the prisoner. Mr. Marshal, make my respects to Lieutenant Mitchell at Orleans, and request him to order that no one shall mention the United States to the prisoner while he is on board ship. You will receive your written orders from the officer on duty here this evening. The court is adjourned without day."

I have always supposed that Colonel Morgan himself took the proceedings of the court to Washington city and explained them to Mr. Jefferson. Certain it is that the President approved them—certain, that is, if I may believe the men who say they have seen his signature. Before the *Nautilus* got round from New Orleans to the northern Atlantic coast with the prisoner on board, the sentence had been approved, and he was a man without a country.

The plan then adopted was substantially the same which was necessarily followed ever after. Perhaps it was suggested by the necessity of sending him by water from Fort Adams and Orleans. The Secretary of the Navy—it must have been the first Crowninshield, though he is a man I do not remember—was requested to put Nolan on board a government vessel bound on a long cruise

and to direct that he should be only so far confined there as to make it certain that he never saw or heard of the country. We had few long cruises then, and the navy was very much out of favour; and as almost all of this story is traditional, as I have explained, I do not know certainly what his first cruise was. But the commander to whom he was intrusted—perhaps it was Tingey or Shaw, though I think it was one of the younger men (we are all old enough now)—regulated the etiquette and the precautions of the affair, and according to his scheme they were carried out, I suppose, till Nolan died.

When I was second officer of the *Intrepid*, some thirty years after, I saw the original paper of instructions. I have been sorry ever since that I did not copy the whole of it. It ran, however, much in this way:

“WASHINGTON (with a date which must have been late in 1807).

“SIR—You will receive from Lieutenant Neale the person of Philip Nolan, late a lieutenant in the United States Army.

“This person on his trial by court-martial expressed, with an oath, the wish that he might ‘never hear of the United States again.’

“The Court sentenced him to have his wish fulfilled.

“For the present, the execution of the order is intrusted by the President to this Department.

“You will take the prisoner on board your ship, and keep him there with such precautions as shall prevent his escape.

“You will provide him with such quarters, rations, and clothing as would be proper for an officer of his late rank if he were a passenger on your vessel on the business of his Government.

“The gentlemen on board will make any arrangements agreeable to themselves regarding his society. He is to be exposed to no indignity of any kind, nor is he ever unnecessarily to be reminded that he is a prisoner.

“But under no circumstances is he ever to hear of his country or to see any information regarding it; and you will especially caution all the officers under your command to take care that, in the various indulgences which may be granted, this rule, in which his punishment is involved, shall not be broken.

“It is the intention of the Government that he shall never again see the country which he has disowned. Before the end of your cruise you will receive orders which will give effect to this intention.—Respectfully yours,

“W. SOUTHWELL,

“For the Secretary of the Navy.”

If I had only preserved the whole of this paper, there would be no break in the beginning of my sketch of this story. For Captain Shaw, if it were he, handed it to his successor in the charge, and he to his, and I suppose the commander of the *Levant* has it to-day as his authority for keeping this man in this mild custody.

The rule adopted on board the ships on which I have met "the man without a country" was, I think, transmitted from the beginning. No mess liked to have him permanently, because his presence cut off all talk of home or of the prospect of return, of politics or letters, of peace or of war—cut off more than half the talk men like to have at sea. But it was always thought too hard that he should never meet the rest of us, except to touch hats, and we finally sank into one system. He was not permitted to talk with the men unless an officer was by. With officers he had unrestrained intercourse, as far as they and he chose. But he grew shy, though he had favourites: I was one. Then the Captain always asked him to dinner on Monday. Every mess in succession took up the invitation in its turn. According to the size of the ship, you had him at your mess more or less often at dinner. His breakfast he ate in his own stateroom—which was where a sentinel or somebody on the watch could see the door. And whatever else he ate or drank, he ate or drank alone. Sometimes, when the marines or sailors had any special jollification, they were permitted to invite "Plain-Buttons," as they called him. Then Nolan was sent with some officer, and the men were forbidden to speak of home while he was there. I believe the theory was that the sight of his punishment did them good. They called him "Plain-Buttons" because, while he always chose to wear a regulation army uniform, he was not permitted to wear the army button, for the reason that it bore either the initials or the insignia of the country he had disowned.

I remember, soon after I joined the navy, I was on shore with some of the older officers from our ship and from the *Brandywine*, which we had met at Alexandria. We had leave to make a party and go up to Cairo and the Pyramids. As we jogged along (you went on donkeys then), some of the gentlemen (we boys called them "Dons," but the phrase was long since changed) fell to talking about Nolan, and some one told the system which was adopted from the first about his books and other reading. As he was almost never permitted to go on shore, even though the vessel lay in port for months, his time at the best hung heavy; and everybody was permitted to lend him books if they were not published in America and made no allusion to it. These were common enough in the old days, when people in the other hemisphere talked of the United

States as little as we do of Paraguay. He had almost all the foreign papers that came into the ship, sooner or later ; only somebody must go over them first, and cut out any advertisement or stray paragraph that alluded to America. This was a little cruel sometimes, when the back of what was cut out might be as innocent as Hesiod. Right in the midst of one of Napoleon's battles, or one of Canning's speeches, poor Nolan would find a great hole, because on the back of the page of that paper there had been an advertisement of a packet for New York, or a scrap from the President's message. I say this was the first time I ever heard of this plan, which afterward I had enough and more than enough to do with. I remember it, because poor Phillips, who was of the party, as soon as the allusion to reading was made, told a story of something which happened at the Cape of Good Hope on Nolan's first voyage ; and it is the only thing I ever knew of that voyage. They had touched at the Cape, and had done the civil thing with the English Admiral and the fleet, and then, leaving for a long cruise up the Indian Ocean, Phillips had borrowed a lot of English books from an officer, which, in those days, as indeed in these, was quite a windfall. Among them, as the Devil would order, was the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which they had all of them heard of, but which most of them had never seen. I think it could not have been published long. Well, nobody thought there could be any risk of anything national in that, though Phillips swore old Shaw had cut out the *Tempest* from Shakespeare before he let Nolan have it, because he said "the Bermudas ought to be ours, and, by Jove, should be one day." So Nolan was permitted to join the circle one afternoon when a lot of them sat on deck smoking and reading aloud. People do not do such things so often now, but when I was young we got rid of a great deal of time so. Well, so it happened that in his turn Nolan took the book and read to the others, and he read very well, as I know. Nobody in the circle knew a line of the poem, only it was all magic and Border chivalry, and was a thousand years ago. Poor Nolan read steadily through the fifth canto, stopped a minute and drank something, and then began, without a thought of what was coming.

Breathes there the man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said—

It seems impossible to us that anybody ever heard this for the first time ; but all these fellows did then, and poor Nolan himself went on, still unconsciously or mechanically :

This is my own, my native land !

Then they all saw something was to pay ; but he expected to get through, I suppose, turned a little pale, but plunged on :

Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned !
From wandering on a foreign strand ?—
If such there breathe, go, mark him well—

By this time the men were all beside themselves, wishing there was any way to make him turn over two pages. But he had not quite presence of mind for that ; he gagged a little, coloured crimson, and staggered on :

For him no minstrel raptures swell ;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim,
Despite these titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentred all in self—

and here the poor fellow choked, could not go on, but started up, swung the book into the sea, vanished into his stateroom, “ And, by Jove ! ” said Phillips, “ we did not see him for two months again. And I had to make up some beggarly story to that English surgeon why I did not return his Walter Scott to him.”

The story shows about the time when Nolan's braggadocio must have broken down. At first, they said, he took a very high tone, considered his imprisonment a mere farce, affected to enjoy the voyage, and all that ; but Phillips said that after he came out of his stateroom he never was the same man again, unless it was the Bible or Shakespeare, or something else he was sure of. But it was not that merely. He never entered in with the other young men exactly as a companion again. He was always shy afterward, when I knew him, very seldom spoke, unless he was spoken to, except to a very few friends. He lighted up occasionally—I remember late in his life hearing him fairly eloquent on something which had been suggested to him by one of Fléchier's sermons—but generally he had the nervous tired look of a heart-wounded man.

When Captain Shaw was coming home—if, as I say, it was Shaw—rather to the surprise of everybody they made one of the Windward Islands, and lay off and on for nearly a week. The boys said the officers were sick of salt junk, and meant to have turtle soup before they came home. But after several days the *Warren* came to the same rendezvous ; they exchanged signals, she sent to Phillips and these homeward-bound men letters and papers, and told them she was outward-bound, perhaps to the Mediterranean, and took poor Nolan and his traps on the boat back to try his second cruise. He looked very blank when he was told to get

ready to join her. He had known enough of the signs of the sky to know that till that moment he was going "home." But this was a distinct evidence of something he had not thought of, perhaps—that there was no going home for him, even to a prison. And this was the first of some twenty such transfers, which brought him sooner or later into half our best vessels, but which kept him all his life at least some hundred miles from the country he had hoped he might never hear of again.

It may have been on that second cruise—it was once when he was up the Mediterranean—that Mrs. Graff, the celebrated Southern beauty of those days, danced with him. They had been lying a long time in the Bay of Naples, and the officers were very intimate in the English fleet, and there had been great festivities, and our men thought they must give a great ball on board the ship. How they ever did it on board the *Warren* I am sure I do not know. Perhaps it was not the *Warren*, or perhaps ladies did not take up so much room as they do now. They wanted to use Nolan's stateroom for something, and they hated to do it without asking him to the ball; so the captain said they might ask him if they would be responsible that he did not talk with the wrong people, "who would give him intelligence." So the dance went on, the finest party that had ever been known, I dare say; for I never heard of a man-of-war ball that was not. For ladies they had the family of the American consul, one or two travellers who had adventured so far, and a nice bevy of English girls and matrons, perhaps Lady Hamilton herself.

Well, different officers relieved each other in standing and talking with Nolan in a friendly way, so as to be sure that nobody else spoke to him. The dancing went on with spirit, and after a while even the fellows who took this honorary guard of Nolan ceased to fear any *contretemps*. Only when some English lady—Lady Hamilton, as I said, perhaps—called for a set of "American dances," an odd thing happened. Everybody then danced contra-dances. The black band, nothing loath, conferred as to what "American dances" were and started off with "Virginia Reel," which they followed with "Money-Musk," which, in its turn in those days, should have been followed by "The Old Thirteen." But just as Dick, the leader, tapped for his fiddles to begin, and bent forward, about to say, in true negro state, "'The Old Thirteen,' gentlemen and ladies!" as he had said "'Virginny Reel,' if you please!" and "'Money-Musk,' if you please!" the captain's boy tapped him on the shoulder, whispered to him, and he did not announce the name of the dance. He merely bowed, began on the air, and they all fell to—the officers teaching the English girls the figure, but not telling them why it had no name.

But that is not the story I started to tell. As the dancing went on, Nolan and our fellows all got at ease, as I said—so much so, that it seemed quite natural for him to bow to that splendid Mrs. Graff, and say :

“ I hope you have not forgotten me, Miss Rutledge. Shall I have the honour of dancing ? ”

He did it so quickly that Fellows, who was with him, could not hinder him. She laughed and said : “ I am not Miss Rutledge any longer, Mr. Nolan, but I will dance all the same,” just nodded to Fellows, as if to say he must leave Mr. Nolan to her, and led him off to the place where the dance was forming.

Nolan thought he had got his chance. He had known her at Philadelphia, and at other places had met her, and this was a godsend. You could not talk in contra-dances, as you do in cotillions, or even in the pauses of waltzing, but there were chances for tongues and sounds, as well as for eyes and blushes. He began with her travels, and Europe, and Vesuvius, and the French, and then, when they had worked down, and had that long talking time at the bottom of the set, he said boldly, a little pale, as she told me the story years after :

“ And what do you hear from home, Mrs. Graff ? ”

And that splendid creature looked through him. Jove ! how she must have looked through him !

“ Home !! Mr. Nolan !!! I thought you were the man who never wanted to hear of home again ! ” And she walked directly up the deck to her husband, and left poor Nolan alone, as he always was. He did not dance again. I cannot give any history of him in order ; nobody can now, and, indeed, I am not trying to.

These are the traditions, which I sort out, as I believe them, from the myths which have been told about this man for forty years. The lies that have been told about him are legion. The fellows used to say he was the “ Iron Mask,” and poor George Pons went to his grave in the belief that this was the author of “ Junius,” who was being punished for his celebrated libel on Thomas Jefferson. Pons was not very strong in the historical line.

A happier story than either of these I have told is of the war. That came along soon after. I have heard this affair told in three or four ways, and, indeed, it may have happened more than once. But which ship it was on I cannot tell. However, in one, at least, of the great frigate duels with the English, in which the navy was really baptized, it happened that a round shot from the enemy entered one of our ports square, and took right down the officer of the gun himself, and almost every man of the gun's crew. Now you may say what you choose about courage, but that is not a nice thing to see. But, as the men who were not killed picked them-

selves up, and as they and the surgeon's people were carrying off the bodies, there appeared Nolan, in his shirt-sleeves, with the rammer in his hand, and, just as if he had been the officer, told them off with authority—who should go to the cockpit with the wounded men, who should stay with him—perfectly cheery, and with that way which makes men feel sure all is right and is going to be right. And he finished loading the gun with his own hands, aimed it, and bade the men fire. And there he stayed, captain of that gun, keeping those fellows in spirits, till the enemy struck, sitting on the carriage while the gun was cooling, though he was exposed all the time, showing them easier ways to handle heavy shot, making the raw hands laugh at their own blunders, and when the gun cooled again, getting it loaded and fired twice as often as any other gun on the ship. The captain walked forward by way of encouraging the men, and Nolan touched his hat and said :

“ I am showing them how we do this in the artillery, sir.”

And this is the part of the story where all the legends agree. The commodore said :

“ I see you do, and I thank you, sir ; and I shall never forget this day, sir, and you never shall, sir.”

And after the whole thing was over, and he had the Englishman's sword, in the midst of the state and ceremony of the quarter-deck, he said :

“ Where is Mr. Nolan ? Ask Mr. Nolan to come here.”

And when Mr. Nolan came, he said :

“ Mr. Nolan, we are all very grateful to you to-day ; you are one of us to-day ; you will be named in the despatches.”

And then the old man took off his own sword of ceremony, and gave it to Nolan, and made him put it on. The man told me this who saw it. Nolan cried like a baby, and well he might. He had not worn a sword since that infernal day at Fort Adams. But always afterwards, on occasions of ceremony, he wore that quaint old French sword of the commodore's.

The captain did mention him in the despatches. It was always said he asked that he might be pardoned. He wrote a special letter to the Secretary of War. But nothing ever came of it. As I said, that was about the time when they began to ignore the whole transaction at Washington, and when Nolan's imprisonment began to carry itself on because there was nobody to stop it without any new orders from home.

I have heard it said that he was with Porter when he took possession of the Nukahiva Islands. Not this Porter, you know, but old Porter, his father, Essex Porter—that is, the old Essex Porter, not this Essex. As an artillery officer, who had seen service in the West, Nolan knew more about fortifications, embrasures,

ravelins, stockades, and all that, than any of them did; and he worked with a right good will in fixing that battery all right. I have always thought it was a pity Porter did not leave him in command there with Gamble. That would have settled all the question about his punishment. We should have kept the islands, and at this moment we should have one station in the Pacific Ocean. Our French friends, too, when they wanted this little watering-place, would have found it was preoccupied. But Madison and the Virginians, of course, flung all that away.

All that was near fifty years ago. If Nolan was thirty then, he must have been near eighty when he died. He looked sixty when he was forty. But he never seemed to me to change a hair afterward. As I imagine his life, from what I have seen and heard of it, he must have been in every sea, and yet almost never on land. He must have known, in a formal way, more officers in our service than any man living knows. He told me once, with a grave smile, that no man in the world lived so methodical a life as he. "You know the boys say I am the Iron Mask, and you know how busy he was." He said it did not do for any one to try to read all the time, more than to do anything else all the time, but that he read just five hours a day. "Then," he said, "I keep up my note-books, writing in them at such and such hours from what I have been reading, and I include in these my scrap-books." These were very curious indeed. He had six or eight, of different subjects. There was one of History, one of Natural Science, one which he called "Odds and Ends." But they were not merely books of extracts from newspapers. They had bits of plants and ribbons, shells tied on, and carved scraps of bone and wood, which he had taught the men to cut for him, and they were beautifully illustrated. He drew admirably. He had some of the funniest drawings there, and some of the most pathetic that I have ever seen in my life. I wonder who will have Nolan's scrap-books.

Well, he said his reading and his notes were his profession, and that they took five hours and two hours respectively of each day. "Then," said he, "every man should have a diversion as well as a profession. My Natural History is my diversion." That took two hours a day more. The men used to bring him birds and fish, but on a long cruise he had to satisfy himself with centipedes and cockroaches and such small game. He was the only naturalist I ever met who knew anything about the habits of the house-fly and the mosquito. All those people can tell you whether they are *Lepidoptera* or *Steptopotera*; but as for telling you how you can get rid of them, or how they get away from you when you strike at them—why, Linnaeus knew as little of that as John Foy, the idiot, did.

These nine hours made Nolan's regular daily "occupation." The

rest of the time he talked or walked. Till he grew very old, he went aloft a great deal. He always kept up his exercise, and I never heard that he was ill. If any other man was ill, he was the kindest nurse in the world ; and he knew more than half the surgeons do. Then, if anybody was sick or died, or if the captain wanted him to, on any other occasion, he was always ready to read prayers. I have said that he read beautifully.

My own acquaintance with Philip Nolan began six or eight years after the English war, on my first voyage after I was appointed a midshipman. It was in the first days after our Slave-Trade treaty, while the Reigning House, which was still the House of Virginia, had still a sort of sentimentalism about the suppression of the horrors of the Middle Passage, and something was sometimes done that way. We were in the South Atlantic on that business. From the time I joined, I believe I thought Nolan was a sort of lay chaplain—a chaplain with a blue coat. I never asked about him. Everything in the ship was strange to me. I knew it was green to ask questions, and I suppose I thought there was a “ Plain-Buttons ” on every ship. We had him to dine in our mess once a week, and the caution was given that on that day nothing was to be said about home. But if they had told us not to say anything about the planet Mars or the Book of Deuteronomy, I should not have asked why ; there were a great many things which seemed to me to have as little reason.

I first came to understand anything about “ the man without a country ” one day when we overhauled a dirty little schooner which had slaves on board. An officer was sent to take charge of her, and, after a few minutes, he sent back his boat to ask that some one might be sent him, who could speak Portuguese. We were all looking over the rail when the message came, and we all wished we could interpret, when the captain asked who spoke Portuguese. But none of the officers did, and just as the captain was sending forward to ask if any of the people could, Nolan stepped out and said he should be glad to interpret, if the captain wished, as he understood the language. The captain thanked him, fitted out another boat with him, and in this boat it was my luck to go. When we got there it was such a scene as you seldom see, and never want to. Nastiness beyond account, and chaos run loose in the midst of the nastiness. There were not a great many of the negroes ; but by way of making what there were understand that they were free, Vaughan had had their handcuffs and anklecuffs knocked off, and, for convenience’ sake, was putting them upon the rascals of the schooner’s crew. The negroes were, most of them, out of the hold, and swarming all round the dirty deck, with a central throng surrounding Vaughan and addressing him in every dialect and *patois* of a dialect, from the Zulu click up to the Parisian of Beledjereed.

As we came on deck, Vaughan looked down from a hogshead, on which he had mounted in desperation, and said :

"For God's love, is there anybody who can make these wretches understand something? The men gave them rum, and that did not quiet them. I knocked that big fellow down twice, and that did not soothe him. And then I talked Choctaw to all of them together, and I'll be hanged if they understood that as well as they understood the English."

Nolan said he could speak Portuguese, and one or two fine-looking Kroomen were dragged out, who, as it had been found already, had worked for the Portuguese on the coast at Fernando Po.

"Tell them they are free," said Vaughan. "And tell them that these rascals are to be hanged as soon as we can get rope enough."

Nolan "put that into Spanish"—that is, he explained it in such Portuguese as the Kroomen could understand, and they in turn to such of the negroes as could understand them. Then, there was such a yell of delight, clinching of fists, leaping and dancing, kissing of Nolan's feet, and a general rush made to the hogshead by way of spontaneous worship of Vaughan, as the *deus ex machina* of the occasion.

"Tell them," said Vaughan, well pleased, "that I will take them all to Cape Palmas."

This did not answer so well. Cape Palmas was practically as far from the homes of most of them as New Orleans or Rio Janeiro was—that is, they would be eternally separated from home there. And their interpreters, as we could understand, instantly said, "*Ah, non Palmas,*" and began to propose infinite other expedients in most voluble language. Vaughan was rather disappointed at this result of his liberality, and asked Nolan eagerly what they said. The drops stood on poor Nolan's white forehead, as he hushed the men down, and said :

"He says, 'Not Palmas.' He says, 'Take us home, take us to our own country, take us to our own house, take us to our own pickaninnies and our own women.' He says he has an old father and mother who will die if they do not see him. And this one says he left his people all sick, and paddled down to Fernando to beg the white doctor to come and help them, and that these devils caught him in the bay just in sight of home, and that he has not seen anybody from home since then. And this one says," choked out Nolan, "that he has not heard a word from his home in six months, while he has been locked up in that infernal barracoon."

Vaughan always said he grew grey himself while Nolan struggled through this interpretation. I, who did not understand anything of the passion involved in it, saw that the very elements were

melting with fervent heat, and that something was to pay somewhere. Even the negroes themselves stopped howling, as they saw Nolan's agony and Vaughan's almost equal agony of sympathy. As quick as he could get words, he said :

"Tell them yes, yes, yes ; tell them they shall go to the Mountains of the Moon, if they will. If I sail the schooner through the Great White Desert, they shall go home !"

And after some fashion Nolan said so. And then they all fell to kissing him again, and wanted to rub his nose with theirs.

But he could not stand it long, and, getting Vaughan to say he might go back, he beckoned me down into our boat. As we lay back in the stern-sheets and the men gave way, he said to me : "Youngster, let that show you what it is to be without a family, without a home, and without a country. And if you are ever tempted to say a word or to do a thing that shall put a bar between you and your family, your home, and your country, pray God in His mercy to take you that instant home to His own heaven. Stick by your family, boy ; forget you have a self, while you do everything for them. Think of your home, boy ; write and send and talk about it. Let it be nearer and nearer to your thought the farther you have to travel from it ; and rush back to it when you are free, as that poor black slave is doing now. And for your country, boy," and the words rattled in his throat, "and for that flag," and he pointed to the ship, "never dream a dream but of serving her as she bids you, though the service carry you through a thousand hells. No matter what happens to you, no matter who flatters you or who abuses you, never look at another flag, never let a night pass but you pray God to bless that flag. Remember, boy, that behind all these men you have to do with, behind officers, and government, and people even, there is the Country Herself, your Country, and that you belong to Her as you belong to your own mother. Stand by Her, boy, as you would stand by your mother, if those devils there had got hold of her to-day !"

I was frightened to death by his calm, hard passion, but I blundered out that I would, by all that was holy, and that I had never thought of doing anything else. He hardly seemed to hear me, but he did, almost in a whisper, say : "Oh, if anybody had said so to me when I was your age !"

I think it was this half-confidence of his, which I never abused, for I never told this story till now, which afterwards made us great friends. He was very kind to me. Often he sat up, or even got up, at night, to walk the deck with me, when it was my watch. He explained to me a great deal of my mathematics, and I owe to him my taste for mathematics. He lent me books, and helped me about my reading. He never alluded so directly to his story again, but

from one and another officer I have learned, in thirty years, what I am telling. When we parted from him in St. Thomas harbour at the end of our cruise I was more sorry than I can tell. I was very glad to meet him again in 1830; and later in life, when I thought I had some influence in Washington, I moved heaven and earth to have him discharged. But it was like getting a ghost out of prison. They pretended there was no such man, and never was such a man. They will say so at the Department now! Perhaps they do not know. It will not be the first thing in the service of which the Department appears to know nothing!

There is a story that Nolan met Burr once on one of our vessels, when a party of Americans came on board in the Mediterranean. But this I believe to be a lie; or, rather, it is a myth, *ben trovato*, involving a tremendous blowing-up with which he sunk Burr, asking him how he liked to be "without a country." But it is clear from Burr's life that nothing of the sort could have happened, and I mention this only as an illustration of the stories which get a-going where there is the least mystery at bottom.

So poor Philip Nolan had his wish fulfilled. I know but one fate more dreadful: it is the fate reserved for those men who shall have one day to exile themselves from their country because they have attempted her ruin, and shall have at the same time to see the prosperity and honour to which she rises when she has rid herself of them and their iniquities. The wish of poor Nolan, as we all learned to call him, not because his punishment was too great, but because his repentance was so clear, was precisely the wish of every Bragg and Beauregard who broke a soldier's oath two years ago, and of every Maury and Barron who broke a sailor's. I do not know how often they have repented. I do know that they have done all that in them lay that they might have no country, that all the honours, associations, memories, and hopes which belong to "country" might be broken up into little shreds and distributed to the winds. I know, too, that their punishment, as they vegetate through what is left of life to them in wretched Boulognes and Leicester Squares, where they are destined to upbraid each other till they die, will have all the agony of Nolan's, with the added pang that every one who sees them will see them to despise and to execrate them. They will have their wish, like him.

For him, poor fellow, he repented of his folly, and then, like a man, submitted to the fate he had asked for. He never intentionally added to the difficulty or delicacy of the charge of those who had him in hold. Accidents would happen, but they never happened from his fault. Lieutenant Truxton told me that, when Texas was annexed, there was a careful discussion among the officers, whether they should get hold of Nolan's handsome set of maps and cut Texas

out of it—from the map of the world and the map of Mexico. The United States had been cut out when the atlas was bought for him. But it was voted, rightly enough, that to do this would be virtually to reveal to him what had happened, or, as Harry Cole said, to make him think old Burr had succeeded. So it was from no fault of Nolan's that a great botch happened at my own table, when, for a short time, I was in command of the *George Washington* corvette, on the South American station. We were lying in the La Plata, and some of the officers, who had been on shore and had just joined again, were entertaining us with accounts of their misadventures in riding the half-wild horses of Buenos Ayres. Nolan was at table, and was in an unusually bright and talkative mood. Some story of a tumble reminded him of an adventure of his own when he was catching wild horses in Texas with his adventurous cousin, at a time when he must have been quite a boy. He told the story with a good deal of spirit—so much so that the silence which often follows a good story hung over the table for an instant, to be broken by Nolan himself. For he asked perfectly unconsciously :

"Pray, what has become of Texas? After the Mexicans got their independence, I thought that province of Texas would come forward very fast. It is really one of the finest regions on earth; it is the Italy of this continent. But I have not seen or heard a word of Texas for near twenty years."

There were two Texan officers at the table. The reason he had never heard of Texas was that Texas and her affairs had been painfully cut out of his newspapers since Austin began his settlements, so that, while he read of Honduras and Tamaulipas, and, till quite lately, of California, this virgin province, in which his cousin had travelled so far, and, I believe, had died, had ceased to be to him. Waters and Williams, the two Texas men, looked grimly at each other and tried not to laugh. Edward Morris had his attention attracted by the third link in the chain of the captain's chandelier. Watrous was seized with a convulsion of sneezing. Nolan himself saw that something was to pay, he did not know what. And I, as master of the feast, had to say :

"Texas is out of the map, Mr. Nolan. Have you seen Captain Back's curious account of Sir Thomas Roe's Welcome?"

After that cruise I never saw Nolan again. I wrote to him at least twice a year, for in that voyage we became even confidentially intimate; but he never wrote to me. The other men tell me that in those fifteen years he *aged* very fast, as well he might, indeed, but that he was still the same gentle, uncomplaining, silent sufferer that he ever was, bearing as best he could his self-appointed punishment—rather less social, perhaps, with new men whom he did not know, but more anxious, apparently, than ever to serve and befriend and teach

the boys, some of whom fairly seemed to worship him. And now it seems the dear old fellow is dead. He has found a home at last, and a country.

Since writing this, and while considering whether or no I would print it, as a warning to the young Nolans and Vallandighams and Tatnalls of to-day, I have received from Danforth, who is on board the *Levant*, a letter which gives an account of Nolan's last hours. It removes all my doubts about telling this story.

To understand the first words of the letter, the non-professional reader should remember that after 1817 the position of every officer who had Nolan in charge was one of the greatest delicacy. The government had failed to renew the order of 1807 regarding him. What was a man to do? Should he let him go? What, then, if he were called to account by the Department for violating the order of 1807? Should he keep him? What, then, if Nolan should be liberated some day, and should bring an action for false imprisonment or kidnapping against every man who had had him in charge? I urged and pressed this upon Southard, and I have reason to think that other officers did the same thing. But the Secretary always said, as they so often do at Washington, that there were no special orders to give, and that we must act on our judgment. That means, "If you succeed, you will be sustained; if you fail, you will be disavowed." Well, as Danforth says, all that is over now, though I do not know but I expose myself to a criminal prosecution on the evidence of the very revelation I am making.

Here is the letter:

"LEVANT, 2° 2' S. @ 131° W.

"DEAR FRED—I try to find heart and life to tell you that it is all over with dear old Nolan. I have been with him on this voyage more than I ever was, and I can understand wholly now the way in which you used to speak of the dear old fellow. I could see that he was not strong, but I had no idea the end was so near. The doctor has been watching him very carefully, and yesterday morning came to me and told me that Nolan was not so well, and had not left his stateroom—a thing I never remember before. He had let the doctor come and see him as he lay there—the first time the doctor had been in the stateroom—and he said he should like to see me. Oh, dear! do you remember the mysteries we boys used to invent about his room in the old *Intrepid* days? Well, I went in, and there, to be sure, the poor fellow lay in his berth, smiling pleasantly as he gave me his hand, but looking very frail. I could not help a glance round, which showed me what a little shrine he had made of the box he was lying in. The Stars and Stripes were triced up above and around a picture of Washington, and he had painted a majestic eagle, with lightnings blazing from his beak and his foot just clasping

the whole globe, which his wings overshadowed. The dear old boy saw my glance, and said, with a sad smile, 'Here, you see, I have a country!' And then he pointed to the foot of his bed, where I had not seen before a great map of the United States, as he had drawn it from memory, and which he had there to look upon as he lay. Quaint, queer old names were on it, in large letters: 'Indiana Territory,' 'Mississippi Territory,' and 'Louisiana Territory,' as I suppose our fathers learned such things. But the old fellow had patched in Texas, too; he had carried his western boundary all the way to the Pacific, but on that shore he had defined nothing.

"Oh, Danforth," he said, 'I know I am dying. I cannot get home. Surely you will tell me something now? Stop! Stop! Do not speak till I say what I am sure you know, that there is not in this ship, that there is not in America—God bless her!—a more loyal man than I. There cannot be a man who loves the old flag as I do, or prays for it as I do, or hopes for it as I do. There are thirty-four stars in it now, Danforth. I thank God for that, though I do not know what their names are. There has never been one taken away; I thank God for that. I know by that that there has never been any successful Burr. Oh, Danforth, Danforth,' he sighed out, 'how like a wretched night's dream a boy's idea of personal fame or of separate sovereignty seems, when one looks back on it after such a life as mine! But tell me—tell me something—tell me everything, Danforth, before I die!'

"Ingham, I swear to you that I felt like a monster that I had not told him everything before. Danger or no danger, delicacy or no delicacy, who was I, that I should have been acting the tyrant all this time over this dear, sainted old man, who had years ago expiated, in his whole manhood's life, the madness of a boy's treason? 'Mr. Nolan,' said I, 'I will tell you everything you ask about. Only, where shall I begin?'

"Oh, the blessed smile that crept over his white face! And he pressed my hand and said, 'God bless you! Tell me their names,' he said, and he pointed to the stars on the flag. 'The last I know is Ohio. My father lived in Kentucky. But I have guessed Michigan and Indiana and Mississippi—that was where Fort Adams is. They make twenty. But where are your other fourteen? You have not cut up any of the old ones, I hope?'

"Well, that was not a bad text, and I told him the names in as good order as I could, and he bade me take down his beautiful map and draw them in as best I could with my pencil. He was wild with delight about Texas—told me how his cousin died there; he had marked a gold cross near where he supposed his grave was; and he had guessed at Texas. Then he was delighted as he saw California and Oregon. That, he said, he had suspected partly,

because he had never been permitted to land on that shore, though the ships were there so much. 'And the men,' said he, laughing, 'brought off a good deal besides furs.' Then he went back—heavens, how far!—to ask about the *Chesapeake*, and what was done to Barron for surrendering her to the *Leopard*, and whether Burr ever tried again—and he ground his teeth with the only passion he showed. But in a moment that was over, and he said, 'God forgive me, for I am sure I forgive him.' Then he asked about the old war—told me the true story of his serving the gun the day we took the *Java*—asked about dear old David Porter, as he called him. Then he settled down more quietly, and very happily, to hear me tell in an hour the history of fifty years.

"How I wished it had been somebody who knew something! But I did as well as I could. I told him of the English war. I told him about Fulton and the steamboat beginning. I told him about old Scott, and Jackson—told him all I could think of about Mississippi, and New Orleans, and Texas, and his own Kentucky. And what do you think he asked? 'Who was in command of the Legion of the West?' I told him it was a very gallant officer named Grant, and that, by our last news, he was about to establish his headquarters at Vicksburg. Then, 'Where was Vicksburg?' I worked that out on the map; it was about a hundred miles, more or less, above his old Fort Adams, and I thought Fort Adams must be a ruin now. 'It must be at old Vick's plantation, at Walnut Hills,' said he; 'well, that is a change!'

"I tell you, Ingham, it was a hard thing to condense the history of half a century into that talk with a sick man. And I do not now know what I told him—of emigration, and the means of it—of steamboats, and railroads, and telegraphs—of inventions, and books, and literature—of the colleges, and West Point, and the Naval School—but with the queerest interruptions that ever you heard. You see, it was Robinson Crusoe asking all the accumulated questions of fifty-six years!

"I remember he asked, all of a sudden, who was President now. And when I told him, he asked if Old Abe was General Benjamin Lincoln's son. He said he met old General Lincoln, when he was quite a boy himself, at some Indian treaty. I said no, that Old Abe was a Kentuckian like himself, but I could not tell him of what family; he had worked up from the ranks. 'Good for him!' cried Nolan; 'I am glad of that. As I have brooded and wondered, I have thought our danger was in keeping up those regular successions in the first families.' Then I got talking about my visit to Washington. I told him of meeting the Oregon Congressman, Harding; I told him about the Smithsonian, and the exploring Expedition; I told him about the Capitol, and the statues for the pediment, and

Crawford's Liberty, and Greenough's Washington. Ingham, I told him everything I could think of that would show the grandeur of his country and its prosperity ; but I could not make up my mouth to tell him a word about this infernal rebellion.

"And he drank it in and enjoyed it as I cannot tell you. He grew more and more silent, yet I never thought he was tired or faint. I gave him a glass of water, but he just wet his lips, and told me not to go away. Then he asked me to bring the Presbyterian 'Book of Public Prayer,' which lay there, and said, with a smile, that it would open at the right place—and so it did. There was his double red mark down the page. And I knelt down and read, and he repeated with me, 'For ourselves and our country, oh, gracious God, we thank Thee that, notwithstanding our manifold transgressions of Thy holy laws, Thou hast continued to us Thy marvellous kindness'—and so to the end of that thanksgiving. Then he turned to the end of the same book, and I read the words more familiar to me : 'Most heartily beseech Thee with Thy favour to behold and bless Thy servant, the President of the United States, and all others in authority'—and the rest of the Episcopal collect. 'Danforth,' said he, 'I have repeated those prayers night and morning, it is now fifty-five years.' And then he said he would go to sleep.

"He bent me down over him and kissed me, and he said, 'Look in my Bible, Danforth, when I am gone.' And I went away.

"But I had no thought it was the end. I thought he was tired and would sleep. I knew he was happy, and I wanted him to be alone.

"But in an hour, when the doctor went in gently, he found Nolan had breathed his life away with a smile. He had something pressed close to his lips. It was his father's badge of the Order of the Cincinnati.

"We looked in his Bible, and there was a slip of paper at the place where he had marked the text :

" 'They desire a country, even a heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God : for He hath prepared for them a city.'

"On this slip of paper he had written :

" 'Bury me in the sea ; it has been my home, and I love it. But will not some one set up a stone for my memory at Fort Adams or at Orleans, that my disgrace may not be more than I ought to bear ? Say on it :

" 'In Memory of

" 'PHILIP NOLAN,

" 'Lieutenant in the Army of the United States.

" 'He loved his country as no other man has
loved her ; but no man deserved
less at her hands.' "

EDWARD EVERETT HALE

MY DOUBLE AND HOW HE UNDID ME

I AM, or rather was, a minister of Sandemanian connection. I was settled in the active, wide-awake town of Naguadavick, on one of the finest water-powers in Maine. We used to call it a Western town in the heart of the civilisation of New England. A charming place it was and is. A spirited, brave young parish had I, and it seemed as if we might have all "the joy of eventful living" to our hearts' content.

Alas! how little we knew on the day of my ordination, and in those halcyon moments of our first house-keeping. To be the confidential friend in a hundred families in the town—cutting the social trifle, as my friend Haliburton says, "from the top of the whipped syllabub to the bottom of the sponge-cake, which is the foundation"—to keep abreast of the thought of the age in one's study, and to do one's best on Sunday to interweave that thought with the active life of an active town, and to inspirit both and to make both infinite by glimpses of the Eternal Glory, seemed such an exquisite forelook into one's life! Enough to do, and all so real and so grand! If this vision could only have lasted!

The truth is, this vision was not in itself a delusion, nor, indeed, half bright enough. If one could only have been left to do his own business, the vision would have accomplished itself and brought out new paraheliacal visions, each as bright as the original. The misery was and is, as we found out, I and Polly, before long, that beside the visions, and besides the usual human and finite failures in life (such as breaking the old pitcher that came over in the *May-flower*, and putting into the fire the Alpenstock with which her father climbed Mont Blanc)—besides these, I say (imitating the style of Robinson Crusoe), there were pitch-forked in on us a great rowen-heap of humbugs, handed down from some unknown seed-time, in which we were expected, and I chiefly, to fulfil certain public functions before the community, of the character of those fulfilled by the third row of supernumeraries who stand behind the Sepoys in the spectacle of the *Cataract of the Ganges*. They were

the duties, in a word, which one performs as member of one or another social class or subdivision, wholly distinct from what one does as A. by himself A. What invisible power put these functions on me, it would be very hard to tell. But such power there was and is. And I had not been at work a year before I found I was living two lives, one real and one merely functional—for two sets of people, one my parish, whom I loved, and the other a vague public, for whom I did not care two straws. All this was a vague notion, which everybody had and has, that this second life would eventually bring out some great results, unknown at present, to somebody somewhere.

Crazed by this duality of life, I first read Dr. Wigan on the *Duality of the Brain*, hoping that I could train one side of my head to do these outside jobs, and the other to do my intimate and real duties. . . . But Dr. Wigan does not go into these niceties of this subject, and I failed. It was then that, on my wife's suggestion, I resolved to look out for a Double.

I was, at first, singularly successful. We happened to be recreating at Stafford Springs that summer. We rode out one day, for one of the relaxations of that watering-place, to the great Monson Poorhouse. We were passing through one of the large halls, when my destiny was fulfilled!

He was not shaven. He had on no spectacles. He was dressed in a green baize roundabout and faded blue overalls, worn sadly at the knee. But I saw at once he was of my height, five feet four and a half. He had black hair, worn off by his hat. So have and have not I. He stooped in walking. So do I. His hands were large, and mine. And—choicest gift of Fate in all—he had, not "a strawberry mark on his left arm," but a cut from a juvenile brick-bat over his right eye, slightly affecting the play of that eyebrow. Reader, so have I! My fate was sealed!

A word with Mr. Holly, one of the inspectors, settled the whole thing. It proved that this Dennis Shea was a harmless, amiable fellow, of the class known as shiftless, who had sealed his fate by marrying a dumb wife, who was at that moment ironing in the laundry. Before I left Stafford, I had hired both for five years. We had applied to Judge Pyncheon, then the probate judge at Springfield, to change the name of Dennis Shea to Frederic Ingham. We had explained to the judge, what was the precise truth, that an eccentric gentleman wished to adopt Dennis, under this new name, into his family. It never occurred to him that Dennis might be more than fourteen years old. And thus, to shorten this preface, when we returned at night to my parsonage at Naguadavick, there entered Mrs. Ingham, her new dumb laundress, myself, who am Mr. Frederic Ingham, and my double, who was Mr. Frederic Ingham by as good right as I.

Oh the fun we had the next morning in shaving his beard to my pattern, cutting his hair to match mine, and teaching him how to wear and how to take off gold-bowed spectacles ! Really, they were electro-plate, and the glass was plain (for the poor fellow's eyes were excellent). Then in four successive afternoons I taught him four speeches. I had found these would be quite enough for the supernumerary-Sepoy line of life, and it was well for me they were ; for though he was good-natured he was very shiftless, and it was, as our national proverb says, " like pulling teeth " to teach him. But at the end of the next week he could say, with quite an easy and frisky air :

1. " Very well, thank you. And you ? " This for my answer to casual salutations.

2. " I am very glad you liked it."

3. " There has been so much said, and, on the whole, so well said, that I will not occupy the time."

4. " I agree, in general, with my friend the other side of the room."

At first I had a feeling that I was going to be at great cost for clothing him. But it proved, of course, at once, that, whenever he was out, I should be at home. And I went, during the bright period of his success, to so few of those awful pageants which require a black dress-coat and what the ungodly call, after Mr. Dickens, a white choker, that in the happy retreat of my own dressing-gowns and jackets my days went by as happily and cheaply as those of another Thalaba. And Polly declares there never was a year when the tailoring cost so little. He lived (Dennis, not Thalaba) in his wife's room over the kitchen. He had orders never to show himself at that window. When he appeared in the front of the house, I retired to my sanctissimum and my dressing-gown. In short, the Dutchman and his wife, in the old weather-box, had not less to do with each other than he and I. He made the furnace fire and split the wood before daylight ; then he went to sleep again, and slept late : then came for orders, with a red silk bandanna tied round his head, with his overalls on, and his dress-coat and spectacles off. If we happened to be interrupted, no one guessed that he was Frederic Ingham as well as I ; and, in the neighbourhood, there grew up an impression that the minister's Irishman worked daytimes in the factory-village at New Coventry. After I had given him his orders, I never saw him till the next day.

I launched him by sending him to a meeting of the Enlightenment Board. The Enlightenment Board consists of seventy-four members, of whom sixty-seven are necessary to form a quorum. . . . At this particular time we had had four successive meetings, averaging four hours each—wholly occupied in whipping in a

quorum. At the first only eleven men were present ; at the next, by force of three circulars, twenty-seven ; at the third, thanks to two days' canvassing by Auchmuty and myself, begging men to come, we had sixty. Half the others were in Europe. But without a quorum we could do nothing. All the rest of us waited grimly for our four hours, and adjourned without any action. At the fourth meeting we had flagged, and only got fifty-nine together.

But on the first appearance of my double—whom I sent on this fatal Monday to the fifth meeting—he was the *sixty-seventh* man who entered the room. He was greeted with a storm of applause ! The poor fellow had missed his way—read the street signs ill through his spectacles (very ill, in fact, without them)—and had not dared to inquire. He entered the room—finding the president and secretary holding to their chairs two judges of the Supreme Court, who were also members *ex officio*, and were begging leave to go away. On his entrance all was changed. *Presto*, the by-laws were suspended, and the Western property was given away. Nobody stopped to converse with him. He voted, as I had charged him to do, in every instance, with the minority. I won new laurels as a man of sense, though a little unpunctual—and Dennis, *alias* Ingham, returned to the parsonage, astonished to see with how little wisdom the world is governed. He cut a few of my parishioners in the street ; but he had his glasses off, and I am known to be near-sighted. Eventually he recognised them more readily than I. . . .

After this he went to several Commencements for me, and ate the dinners provided ; he sat through three of our Quarterly Conventions for me—always voting judiciously, by the simple rule mentioned above, of siding with the minority. And I, meanwhile, who had before been losing caste among my friends, as holding myself aloof from the associations of the body, began to rise in everybody's favour. "Ingham's a good fellow—always on hand" ; "never talks much, but does the right thing at the right time" ; "is not as unpunctual as he used to be—he comes early, and sits through to the end." "He has got over his old talkative habit, too. I spoke to a friend of his about it once ; and I think Ingham took it kindly," etc., etc.

. . . Polly is more rash than I am, as the reader has observed in the outset of this memoir. She risked Dennis one night under the eyes of her own sex. Governor Gorges had always been very kind to us, and when he gave his great annual party to the town, asked us. I confessed I hated to go. I was deep in the new volume of Pfeiffer's *Mystics*, which Haliburton had just sent me from Boston. "But how rude," said Polly, "not to return the Governor's civility and Mrs. Gorges's, when they will be sure to ask why you are away !"

Still I demurred, and at last she, with the wit of Eve and of Semiramis conjoined, let me off by saying that, if I would go in with her, and sustain the initial conversations with the Governor and the ladies staying there, she would risk Dennis for the rest of the evening. And that was just what she did. She took Dennis in training all that afternoon, instructed him in fashionable conversation, cautioned him against the temptations of the supper-table—and at nine in the evening he drove us all down in the carry-all. I made the grand star-*entrée* with Polly and the pretty Walton girls, who were staying with us. We had put Dennis into a great rough top-coat, without his glasses; and the girls never dreamed, in the darkness, of looking at him. He sat in the carriage, at the door, while we entered. I did the agreeable to Mrs. Gorges, was introduced to her niece, Miss Fernanda; I complimented Judge Jeffries on his decision in the great case of *D'Aulnay v. Laconia Mining Company*; I stepped into the dressing-room for a moment, stepped out for another, walked home after a nod with Dennis and tying the horse to a pump: and while I walked home, Mr. Frederic Ingham, my double, stepped in through the library into the Gorges's grand saloon.

Oh! Polly died of laughing as she told me of it at midnight! And even here, where I have to teach my hands to hew the beech for stakes to fence our cave, she dies of laughing as she recalls it—and says that single occasion was worth all we have paid for it. Gallant Eve that she is! She joined Dennis at the library door, and in an instant presented him to Dr. Ochterlony, from Baltimore, who was on a visit in town, and was talking with her as Dennis came in. "Mr. Ingham would like to hear what you were telling us about your success among the German population."

And Dennis bowed and said, in spite of a scowl from Polly, "I'm very glad you liked it."

But Dr. Ochterlony did not observe, and plunged into the tide of explanation; Dennis listened like a prime-minister, and bowing like a mandarin, which is, I suppose, the same thing. . . . So was it that, before Dr. Ochterlony came to the "success," or near it, Governor Gorges came to Dennis, and asked him to hand Mrs. Jeffries down to supper, a request which he heard with great joy.

Polly was skipping round the room, I guess, gay as a lark. Auchmuty came to her "in pity for poor Ingham," who was so bored by the stupid pundit—and Auchmuty could not understand why I stood it so long. But when Dennis took Mrs. Jeffries down, Polly could not resist standing near them. He was a little flustered, till the sight of the eatables and drinkables gave him the same Mercian courage which it gave Diggory. A little excited then, he attempted one or two of his speeches to the judge's lady. But

little he knew how hard it was to get in even a *promptu* there edgewise.

"Very well, I thank you," said he, after the eating elements were adjusted, "and you?"

And then did he not have to hear about the mumps, and the measles, and arnica, and belladonna, and camomile-flower, and dodecatheon, till she changed oysters for salad: and then about the old practice and the new, and what her sister said, and what her sister's friend said, and what the physician to her sister's friend said, and then what was said by the brother of the sister of the physician of the friend of her sister, exactly as if it had been in Ollendorff? There was a moment's pause as she declined champagne.

"I am very glad you liked it," said Dennis again, which he never should have said but to one who complimented a sermon.

"Oh! you are so sharp, Mr. Ingham! No! I never drink any wine at all—except sometimes in summer a little currant shrub—from our own currants, you know. My own mother—that is, I call her my own mother, because, you know, I do not remember," etc., etc., etc.; till they came to the candied orange at the end of the feast, when Dennis, rather confused, thought he must say something, and tried No. 4,—“I agree, in general, with my friend the other side of the room,”—which he never should have said but at a public meeting.

But Mrs. Jeffries, who never listens expecting to understand, caught him up instantly with “Well, I’m sure my husband returns the compliment; he always agrees with you—though we do worship with the Methodists; but you know, Mr. Ingham,” etc., etc., etc., till they move upstairs; and as Dennis led her through the hall, he was scarcely understood by any but Polly, as he said, “There has been so much said, and, on the whole, so well said, that I will not occupy the time.”

His great resource the rest of the evening was standing in the library, carrying on animated conversations with one and another in much the same way. Polly had initiated him in the mysteries of a discovery of mine, that it is not necessary to finish your sentences in a crowd, but by a sort of mumble, omitting sibilants and details. This, indeed, if your words fail you, answers even in public extempore speech, but better where other talking is going on.

Thus: “We missed you at the Natural History Society, Ingham.”

Ingham replies, “I am very gligloglum, that is, that you were mmmmm.”

By gradually dropping the voice, the interlocutor is compelled to supply the answer.

“Mrs. Ingham, I hope your friend Augusta is better.”

Augusta has not been ill. Polly cannot think of explaining, however, and answers "Thank you, ma'am; she is very rearasor wewahwewoh," in lower and lower tones.

And Mrs. Throckmorton, who forgot the subject of which she spoke as soon as she asked the question, is quite satisfied. Dennis could see into the card-room, and came to Polly to ask if he might not go and play all-fours. But of course she sternly refused. At midnight they came home delighted—Polly, as I said, wild to tell me the story of the victory: only both the pretty Walton girls said, "Cousin Frederic, you did not come near me all the evening." . . .

But I see I loiter on my story, which is rushing to the plunge. Let me stop an instant more, however, to recall, were it only to myself, that charming year while all was yet well. After the double had become a matter of course, for nearly twelve months before he undid me, what a year it was! Full of active life, full of happy love, of the hardest work, of the sweetest sleep, and the fulfilment of so many of the fresh aspirations and dreams of boyhood! Dennis went to every school-committee meeting, and sat through all those late wranglings which used to keep me up till midnight and awake till morning. He attended all the lectures to which foreign exiles sent me tickets begging me to come for the love of Heaven and of Bohemia. He accepted and used all the tickets for charity concerts which were sent to me. He appeared everywhere where it was specially desirable that "our denomination," or "our party," or "our class," or "our family," or "our street," or "our town," or "our country," or "our State," should be fully represented. . . .

Freed from these necessities, that happy year I began to know my wife by sight. We saw each other sometimes. In those long mornings, when Dennis was in the study explaining to map-peddlers that I had eleven maps of Jerusalem already, and to school-book agents that I would see them hanged before I would be bribed to introduce their text-books into the schools—she and I were at work together, as in those old dreamy days—and in these of our log cabin again. But all this could not last—and at length poor Dennis, my double, overtaken in turn, undid me.

It was thus it happened. There is an excellent fellow—once a minister—I will call him Isaacs—who deserves well of the world till he dies, and after, because he once, in a real exigency, did the right thing, in the right way, at the right time, as no other man could do it. In the world's great football match, the ball by chance found him loitering on the outside of the field; he closed with it, "camped" it, charged it home—yes, right through the other side—not disturbed, not frightened by his own success—and, breathless, found himself a great man, as the Great Delta rang applause.

But he did not find himself a rich man; and the football has never

come in his way again. From that moment to this moment he has been of no use, that one can see at all. Still, for that great act we speak of Isaacs gratefully and remember him kindly ; and he forges on, hoping to meet the football somewhere again. In that vague hope he had arranged a "movement" for a general organisation of the human family into Debating Clubs, County Societies, State Unions, etc., etc., with a view of inducing all children to take hold of the handles of their knives and forks instead of the metal. Children have bad habits in that way. The movement, of course, was absurd ; but we all did our best to forward, not it, but him. It came time for the annual county-meeting on this subject to be held at Naguadavick. Isaacs came round, good fellow ! to arrange for it—got the town-hall, got the Governor to preside (the saint !—he ought to have triplet doubles provided him by law), and then came to get me to speak.

"No," I said, "I would not speak if ten Governors presided. I do not believe in the enterprise. If I spoke, it should be to say children should take hold of the prongs of the forks and the blades of the knives. I would subscribe ten dollars, but I would not speak a mill."

So poor Isaacs went his way sadly, to coax Auchmuty to speak, and Delafield. I went out. Not long after he came back, and told Polly that they promised to speak, the Governor would speak, and he himself would close with the quarterly report, and some interesting anecdotes regarding Miss Biffin's way of handling her knife, and Mr. Nellis's way of footing his fork.

"Now if Mr. Ingham will only come and sit on the platform, he need not say one word ; but it will show well in the paper—it will show that the Sandemanians take as much interest in the movement as the Armenians or the Mesopotamians, and will be a great favour to me."

Polly, good soul ! was tempted, and she promised. She knew Mrs. Isaacs was starving, and the babies—she knew Dennis was at home—and she promised ! Night came, and I returned. I heard her story. I was sorry. I doubted. But Polly had promised to beg me, and I dared all ! I told Dennis to hold his peace, under all circumstances, and sent him down.

It was not half an hour more before he returned, wild with excitement—in a perfect Irish fury—which it was long before I understood. But I knew at once that he had undone me !

What happened was this. The audience got together, attracted by Governor Gorges's name. There were a thousand people. Poor Gorges was late from Augusta. They became impatient. He came in direct from the train at last, really ignorant of the object of the meeting. He opened it in the fewest possible words, and said other

gentlemen were present who would entertain them better than he. The audience were disappointed, but waited.

The Governor, prompted by Isaacs, said, "The Honourable Mr. Delafield will address you."

Delafield had forgotten the knives and forks, and was playing the Ruy Lopez opening at the chess-club.

"The Rev. Mr. Auchmuty will address you."

Auchmuty had promised to speak late, and was at the school-committee.

"I see Dr. Stearns in the hall ; perhaps he will say a word."

Dr. Stearns said he had come to listen and not to speak. The Governor and Isaacs whispered. The Governor looked at Dennis, who was resplendent on the platform ; but Isaacs, to give him his due, shook his head. But the look was enough.

A miserable lad, ill-bred, who had once been in Boston, thought it would sound well to call for me, and peeped out "Ingham !"

A few more wretches cried, "Ingham ! Ingham !" Still Isaacs was firm ; but the Governor, anxious, indeed, to prevent a row, knew I would say something, and said :

"Our friend, Mr. Ingham, is always prepared ; and, though we had not relied upon him, he will say a word, perhaps."

Applause followed, which turned Dennis's head. He rose, fluttered, and tried No. 3 : "There has been so much said, and, on the whole, so well said, that I will not longer occupy the time !" and sat down, looking for his hat ; for things seemed squally.

But the people cried, "Go on ! go on !" and some applauded.

Dennis, still confused, but flattered by the applause, to which neither he nor I are used, rose again, and this time tried No. 2 : "I am very glad you liked it !" in a sonorous, clear delivery.

My best friends stared. All the people who did not know me personally yelled with delight at the aspect of the evening ; the Governor was beside himself, and poor Isaacs thought he was undone ! Alas ! it was I.

A boy in the gallery cried in a loud tone, "It's all an infernal humbug," just as Dennis, waving his hand, commanded silence, and tried No. 4 : "I agree, in general, with my friend the other side of the room."

The poor Governor doubted his senses and crossed to stop him—not in time, however.

The same gallery boy shouted, "How's your mother ?" and Dennis, now completely lost, tried, as his last shot, No. 1, vainly : "Very well, thank you ; and you ?"

I think I must have been undone already. But Dennis, like another Lockhard, chose "to make sicker." The audience rose in

aimed at Dennis, broke all restraint, and, in pure Irish, he delivered himself of an address to the gallery, inviting any person who wished to fight to come down and do so—stating that they were all dogs and cowards and the sons of dogs and cowards—that he would take any five of them single-handed.

“Shure, I have said all his Riverence and the Misthress bade me say,” cried he in defiance; and seizing the Governor’s cane from his hand, brandished it, quarterstaff fashion, above his head. He was, indeed, got from the hall only with the greatest difficulty by the Governor, the City Marshal, who had been called in, and the Superintendent of my Sunday-School.

The universal impression, of course, was that the Rev. Frederic Ingham had lost all command of himself in some of those haunts of intoxication which for fifteen years I had been labouring to destroy. Till this moment, indeed, that is the impression in Naguadavick. The publication of this story will relieve from it a hundred friends of mine who have been sadly wounded by that notion now for years: but I shall not be likely ever to show my head there again.

No. My double has undone me.

We left town at seven the next morning. I came to No. 9, in the Third Range, and settled on the Minister’s Lot. In the new towns in Maine, the first settled minister has a gift of a hundred acres of land. I am the first settled minister in No. 9. My wife and little Pauline are my parish. We raise corn enough to live on in summer; we kill bear’s meat enough to carbonise it in winter. I work on steadily on my *Traces of Sandemanianism in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries*, which I hope to persuade Phillips, Sampson & Co. to publish next year. We are very happy, but the world thinks we are undone.